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THE

MINSTRELSY OF THE WOODS;

OR,

SKETCHES AND SONGS

CONNECTED WITH THE

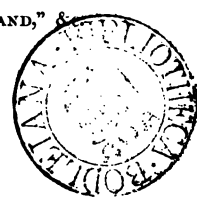
NATURAL HISTORY

OF

SOME OF THE MOST INTERESTING BRITISH AND FOREIGN

BIRDS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE WILD GARLAND," &c.



LONDON:

HARVEY AND DARTON,

GRACECHURCH STREET.

1832.

213.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY JOSEPH RICKERBY,
SHERBOURN LANE.

TO

THE BELOVED YOUNG RELATIVES,

FOR WHOSE AMUSEMENT THESE

SKETCHES OF NATURAL HISTORY

WERE COMMENCED,

THE COMPLETED WORK

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

32.
213.

When morning dawns with radiant light,
Chasing the shadows of the night,
Waking to life each warbling bird,
Then let our cheerful hymns be heard;
When evening comes with soften'd beam,
Let praise be still our grateful theme.

In yon bright world, th' angelic throng
Sing, day and night, their heavenly song;
From earth let feebler notes arise,
To join the chorus of the skies.

WYARDS,
November, 1831.

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THE

MINSTRELSY OF THE WOODS.

INTRODUCTION.

"Their little lives are free from care,
From bush to brake they fly,
Filling the rich ambrosial air
Of summer's painted sky:
They flit about the fragrant wood;
Elisha's God provides them food,
And hears them when they cry.
For ever blithe and blest are they,
Their sinless course a summer's day."

BLACKWOOD.

EVERY study, the pursuit of which leads the young student out into the fields and woods, to observe, in minute detail, the wonderful works of the Author of nature, and learn how "in wisdom he hath made them all,"—every such study is alike healthful to body and mind. The botanist, with his fragrant wild-flowers and wreathed garlands; the entomologist, with his insect train, and all their wonderful transforma-

tions and beautiful forms; the mineralogist, with his no less astonishing and interesting details—all have their respective claims on our notice. But who comes on the field with more attractive trophies than the ornithologist? Who is there, that has not watched the swift-flying birds with delight, and listened with charmed ear to their thousand, thousand songs? The unpaid choristers of the groves are they—the musicians of all times and places. Roaming in the woods or fields, playing in the garden, climbing the mountain, or lingering by the side of the river or the sea-shore—at home, or abroad, have you not often marked with delight, the rapid flight of the various birds passing swiftly through the air? Have you ever considered how it is that they can fly, while you can only walk and run? Perhaps you will say, because they have wings, and we have not. But this is not the only reason. Though you have no wings, you have arms and hands to supply their place, but with these you cannot fly. It would be of no use to you to possess the power, and therefore the great Author of nature has not given it you. Your business is on the earth; but the necessities of birds require that they should be able to move freely through the air. To enable them to do this, they are very differently formed from

man and other animals. If it were possible for you to run as swiftly as the birds can fly, in a few minutes you would become almost breathless, and quite exhausted with the exertion. In order that they may be able to sustain the great efforts they make in flight, and the wonderful speed with which they move, they are formed in such a manner as to have a store of breath provided for their great necessities. To secure this advantage, there are air-vessels, or little cavities for the reception of air, almost all over their bodies; even in their bones, where air often supplies the place of marrow, as you may observe in the bones of a chicken, which have a much smaller proportion of marrow in them than the bones of quadrupeds. This singular provision of nature, besides enabling them to breathe more freely, increases their bulk without adding to their weight, and by that means gives a larger space for the muscles to act on, and so promotes the facility of their flight in another way. This extension of the air-vessels, also effects more speedily the changes in the blood, and thus fits it for a more rapid circulation; by this means greatly increasing the heat of their little bodies, and enabling them to meet, without injury, all the changes of temperature to which they are subject in their passage through the air. The better to fit them

for these changes, the bountiful hand that formed them has prepared a species of clothing unlike that of all other creatures. First, a covering of soft down is scattered over the skin; then, to prevent so light a substance from being blown about, a complete covering is provided of small feathers laid closely one over another, forming a sort of close under garment. Then comes another covering of larger feathers, laid on so nicely, that every part is covered, each feather being fitted exactly to the curve of the body where it is placed: this is its upper garment. Besides this, there are the long wing and tail-feathers, which assist it in its flight. Thus clad in a garb of the warmest, and, at the same time, of the lightest materials, it is singularly fitted to take its course through an element in which it must often encounter the extremes of cold, such as would injure, and perhaps destroy, either man or beast. The distances these winged travellers can go in a few hours is truly wonderful. The great naturalist, Buffon, has observed, that though the stag, the rein-deer, and the elk, can go forty leagues in a single day, and the camel three hundred leagues in eight days, the birds much exceed them all in swiftness. If we were to fix our eyes on a large bird, such as a kite or eagle, when about to take its flight, in less than three

minutes it would fly to so great a distance as to be entirely out of our sight. These birds are said to traverse a space of four thousand five hundred feet in a minute; they may therefore, without difficulty, perform a journey of four hundred leagues in a day, if they were on the wing ten hours out of the twenty-four, which would allow them quite time enough for rest and feeding. That many birds can, and do take such long flights in a short period, has been proved by the observations of travellers and naturalists. Swallows have been seen and caught on the coast of Senegal on the 9th of October, that is to say, eight or nine days after their departure from Europe. There is a well-known story of a falcon belonging to Henry the Second of France, which, pursuing with eagerness a small bustard at Fontainbleau, strayed away from the royal party to which it belonged, and was taken the following day at Malta, the ring which she bore on her foot marking her out as the same bird. A falcon from the Canary Isles, sent to the Duke of Lerma, flew back to the Isle of Teneriffe in sixteen hours, which is a passage of two hundred and fifty leagues. Sea-gulls are said to go a distance of more than two hundred miles, and return the same day.

Another remarkable peculiarity in birds is

their strong and piercing sight. They penetrate with a glance the depth of the forest, and see the fruits and insects necessary for their support, at a distance at which no other creature could perceive them. With a clearness of vision yet more wonderful, they discern, from an amazing height in the air, the minutest objects on the earth. It is said that a hawk, hovering in the air, sees from his station a little lark on a clod of earth in the fields, at twenty times the distance at which a man or a dog can perceive it. The kite too, who soars so high over our heads, when at such a height in the air that we can no longer discern his form, can see the small lizards, field-mice, and birds, in the fields and woods so far beneath him, and selects which he chooses for his prey.

Many are the wonders connected with the history of birds which remain to be told. How beautiful are their nests, so curiously constructed, each bird suiting its dwelling to the wants and habits peculiar to its race! The yapous of South America suspend their nests from the branches of trees, like so many little lamps. The little dabchick makes her nest like a tiny boat, and launches it on the stream or still water, having first securely fixed it to the reeds; and there it rides, like a fairy shallop safely moored.

How astonishing is the instinct which induces these little creatures to emigrate to other countries, when the season approaches in which the food they require is no longer to be found in the land where they have built their nests, and reared their young, and sung their sweetest songs! How amazing the skill with which they pursue their distant journies to precisely those countries which are the best furnished with means for their support! Equally wonderful is their return, at stated periods, to the shores they have quitted. Well may we exclaim, with the delightful naturalist of Selborne,

> "Whence your return by such nice instinct led,
> When spring, soft season, lifts her bloomy head?
> Such baffled searches mock man's prying pride—
> The God of nature is your secret guide."

We cannot willingly close this little sketch without quoting the appropriate and elegantly written observations of a naturalist of the present day. "Birds, generally speaking, appear to belong more to the air than to the earth: they constitute moving republics, which traverse the atmosphere at stated periods in large bodies. These bodies perform their aërial evolutions like an army, crowd into close column, form into triangle, extend in line of battle, or disperse in

light squadrons. The bird knows, by an admirable instinct, the winds and weather which are favourable to his voyage. He can long foresee the approaches of frost, or the return of spring. He needs no compass to direct his course through the empire of the cloud, the thunder, and the tempest; and, while man and beast are creeping on the earth, he breathes the pure air of heaven, and soars upward nearer to the spring of day. He arrives at the term of his voyage, and touches the hospitable land of his destination. He finds there a subsistence prepared by the hand of Providence, and a safe asylum in the grove, the forest, or the mountain, where he revisits the habitation he had tenanted before, the scene of his former delights, the cradle of his infancy. The stork resumes his ancient tower, the nightingale the solitary thicket, the swallow his old window, and the redbreast the mossy trunk of the same oak in which he formerly nestled."*

In conclusion, we must beg to appropriate to our use another interesting passage from the same writer, on the touching exhibitions of parental tenderness displayed by the feathered race, in the patient hatching of their eggs, and the

* See Griffith's Cuvier.

care and defence of their young ones, as long as they require their attention. "The mother, seated the livelong day upon her eggs, forgets all the necessities of nature. Her natural character undergoes a complete change, and flinging off the timidity which usually characterises her, she braves every danger, and dares the most unequal conflicts for the safety of her young. Some birds never quit their nests without plucking feathers from their own breasts to cover their eggs; others cover them with dry leaves; and among some species, the male hatches in his turn, or brings food to the female. So much tenderness and trouble, lavished without compensation; such a sublime and generous self-devotion in the most urgent dangers, proves that this natural and amiable sentiment is not the result of any mechanical connexion of ideas and sensations, but of a law altogether divine. The swallow, precipitating itself into an edifice in flames to rescue its young; the hen, which hesitates not to brave death in defence of her chickens; the timid lark, presenting herself to the fowler, to divert him from her nest; in fine, all these touching evidences of affection for the helpless, in animals so light and volatile, clearly indicate the sacred impulse communicated to all that breathe, by the Mighty Being who

has willed the perpetuity and support of every species. Here, indeed, we recognise the workmanship of the Divinity, in all its admirable wisdom and surpassing benevolence. The finger of God is here!"

[Much of the information contained in this little book, is drawn either from the entertaining volumes of Bewick, or from the more scientific pages of "The Animal Kingdom of Cuvier, with additional Descriptions and Original Matter, by Ed. Griffith, F.L.S. and others."]

CHAPTER I.

NATURALISTS have arranged birds under six orders. In each of these orders there are again sub-divisions; but, as we do not pretend to enter into the minutiæ of ornithology, we shall only notice the six grand divisions, as forming the broad outlines of the science. They are as follow:—

First Order.....Accipitres, or birds of prey.
Second do. .....Passeres, including most of our birds of song, and many others.
Third do. .....Scansores, or Climbers.
Fourth do. .....Gallinæ, or such as resemble our domestic fowls.
Fifth do. .....Grallæ, or Waders.
Sixth do. .....Palmipedes, or Swimmers.

THE FIRST ORDER OF BIRDS.

BIRDS OF PREY. ACCIPITRES.—LINN.

Are known by their bent beak and crooked talons; very powerful arms, by means of which they pursue other birds, and even weak quadrupeds and reptiles. They are among the birds, what the carnivora are among quadrupeds. They form two families, the Diurnal and Nocturnal.—*Cuvier.*

ORDER ACCIPITRES.

The Golden or Royal Eagle.—Ring-tailed Eagle.

Falco chrysaëtos.—Linn. Aquila chrysaëtos.—Cuvier.

From amongst the diurnal birds of prey, we shall select the most powerful and courageous of their tribes, the eagles. They have strong beaks, straight at the base, and bent only at the point. Their legs are clothed with feathers: their wings are as long as their tails. Their flight is both high and rapid, and their courage exceeds that of other birds. Such is Cuvier's description of the eagles, properly so called.

The eagle has often been called the king of birds, and is, among the feathered race, what the lion is among quadrupeds. Distinguished as he is by his lofty mien, his piercing eye, and the air of commanding dignity which pervades his whole appearance, he may well be termed a splendid bird. In fact, he has ever been considered as a fit emblem of all that is noble, magnificent, and powerful. Poets of all ages have availed themselves of the striking attributes of the eagle, and none more beautifully

than the inspired bards of the sacred page. We might give many instances, but we will only select the following admirable passage from the graphic pen of the patriarch Job: "Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high? She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place. From thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off. Her young ones also suck up blood; and where the slain are, there is she." The strength of wing which enables these noble birds to mount on high, and make their dwelling in the rock, also gives them power to traverse league after league, to an immense extent, in pursuit of their needful food, which is often to be sought in some remote valley or forest glade, or on some distant shore. Soaring along on wide-extended wings, the eagle darts a piercing glance over the vast tracts of country spread far beneath, and beholds the prey afar off: then down he sweeps through the pure æther with the speed of an arrow, fastens on his helpless victim, and carries it off in his talons, unless its weight is unusually great. In this case, he remains on the spot to satisfy his hunger, and leaves the remnants of his feast to any bird or beast that may chance to be attracted by it. He himself never returns a second time to feed on a

carcase, nor will he partake of any animal which he has not himself taken in the chase; in this respect, as in many others, resembling the lion, which is said to turn with disgust from a lifeless body. Among the eagles, and all other birds of prey, the female is larger than the male, and appears to possess greater courage and skill in seizing the prey. The male and female are generally seen near each other, as if pursuing the chase in company, except when the female is detained in her nest by her eggs or her little ones. This bird can support life for a very long period without food, which is accounted for by the capacity of his crop to receive an immense quantity more than the bird can digest at the time, and thus he carries about a supply for the wants of many days. Buffon says he knew one of these birds, in a state of captivity, live forty days without food, and that it showed no symptoms of exhaustion till within the last eight days, at the end of which it was killed. This was evidently one of those inhuman experiments, which men are sometimes tempted to make, in the eagerness of their pursuit after scientific knowledge—deeds of cruelty which no discoveries can justify. The eagle can quench his thirst in the blood of his victims, and therefore can pass many days without water.

This circumstance has led people to suppose that the eagle never drinks, an idea which has been proved to be wholly unfounded. If water is offered to him in a state of captivity, he will both drink it and bathe in it, like other birds. Deserts and mountains are the favourite haunts of the eagle tribe.

The golden eagle dwells in solitary state in the mountainous regions of Europe; likewise in various parts of Asia. It is also found in Africa, on the chain of Mount Atlas. In this kingdom, it is to be met with only in the mountainous parts of Ireland, and more rarely on the mountains of Scotland. As these birds require a vast quantity of food to sustain them, it is necessary that they should have a wide circuit to range in search of prey. For this reason, only a single pair of eagles are ever found in one district. There they dwell, amid their mountain fastnesses, the monarchs of a wide domain, and apparently as little disposed to permit a rival on the throne, as any of the princes of our nobler race. In the grandeur of their dwelling-places they have certainly an advantage over the kings of the earth. The mountains and the rocks furnish them with mighty palaces and towers of strength, such as no mortal hand hath ever builded. It is, indeed, in the midst of a noble

heritage, that these royal birds take up their abode. Here they build their nest, which is to last through the whole of a life almost patriarchal in its length, as they are known to live above a century. This nest, which is called an eyrie, is usually built in a cleft of the rock. It is formed of sticks, five or six feet in length, crossed by pliant branches, and then covered with rushes and weeds, and it has no other shelter than that which is afforded it by a projection of the rock, or an overhanging crag. Here the female deposits every year two or three eggs; but it is said that rarely more than one of them is hatched. The quantity of food required by the young bird must be very great; and it has been imagined that, weary of the labour of procuring it, the female soon chases the young eaglet from the nest, and leaves it to provide for itself. This, later naturalists have decided to be a false statement. It is well known, that when a mountaineer has discovered an eagle's nest, he has no difficulty in securing a good supply of provisions for himself for a considerable time, by robbing the young birds of part of their supply, at a time when the parents are absent from the nest. A poor man in the county of Kerry, some years ago, obtained food in abundance for his family for a whole year, by thus seizing on a share of

the young eaglets' daily portion. In order to prolong the attention of the parent birds to their voracious young ones beyond the usual period, he clipt the wings of the eaglets, and thus prevented their departure from the nest. As soon as they have sufficient strength of wing to go in search of prey and provide for their own wants, the old birds have fulfilled all the parental duties which nature requires of them, and dismiss their eaglets to seek their fortunes on some distant mountain, where they too may "make their nest on high, and abide on the crag of the rock."

"High from the summit of a craggy cliff,
Hung o'er the deep, such as amazing frowns
On utmost Kilda's shore, whose lonely race
Resign the setting sun to Indian worlds,
The royal eagle draws his vigorous young,
Strong pounced, and ardent with paternal fire.
Now fit to raise a kingdom of their own,
He drives them from his fort, the towering seat
For ages of his empire; which, in peace,
Unstain'd he holds, while many a league to sea
He wings his course, and preys in distant isles."

THOMSON.

Many anecdotes are related of the rapacity of this bird, in seizing, and carrying to his nest in triumph, young children left unguarded in the neighbourhood of his haunts. These are so well known, that we are disposed to pass them by, and give our readers, in their place, a narrative

of a more unusual nature, which exibits the eagle not as the agressor and the conqueror, but as the victim and the prey of an enemy, who seems little fitted by nature to gain an advantage over him. We are indebted for the followinw particulars, to a writer in the Magazine of Natural History.

"A group of hay-makers, while busy at their work on Chapel-hope meadow, at the upper end of St. Mary's Loch in Selkirkshire, saw an eagle rising above the steep mountains that enclose the narrow valley. The eagle himself was, indeed, no unusual sight: but there is something so imposing and majestic in the flight of this noble bird while he soars upwards in spiral circles, that it fascinates the attention of most people. In general, the motion of his wings is hardly perceptible: an impetus is given, but the stroke is far between, and he seems impelled by some invisible power. The spectators were soon aware of something peculiar in the flight of the bird they were observing: he used his wings violently, and the strokes were often repeated, as if he had been alarmed and hurried by unusual agitation. They noticed, at the same time, that he wheeled in circles that seemed constantly decreasing, while his ascent was proportionably rapid. The now idle hay-makers drew together

in close consultation on the singular case, and continued to keep their eyes on the seemingly distressed eagle, until he was nearly out of sight, rising still higher and higher in the air. In a short while, however, they were all convinced that he was again seeking the earth, evidently not as he ascended, in spiral curves: it was like something falling, and with great rapidity. As he approached the ground, they clearly saw he was trembling in his fall like a shot bird. The convulsive fluttering of his wings stopped the descent but very little, until he fell at a small distance from the men and boys of the party, who had naturally run forward, highly excited by this strange occurrence. A large black-tailed weasel or stoat, ran from under the body as they came near, turned with the usual nonchalance and impudence of the tribe, stood up upon its hind legs, crossed its fore-paws over its nose, surveyed its enemy a moment or two, (as they often do when no dog is near,) and bounded into a saugh bush. The king of the air was dead; and what was more surprising, he was covered with his own blood. Upon further examination, they found his throat cut; and the stoat has been suspected as the regicide unto this day. This singular story I always looked upon as too good to be true, until lately a friend

mentioned the following fact, which came under his own observation. A light snow covered the ground, and he, having walked out to an adjoining hill to meet one of his shepherds, fell in with the track of one of these weasels, which is easily to be distinguished from that of the smaller species, by the larger foot print and length of the spring, among the snow. He followed the track for some time, for his amusement, along the side of the hill, until he came to the marks where a pair of grouse had been sitting, when he lost all traces of the weasel. As there was no appearance of a hole, he was much surprised, and paying close attention to the track of the animal, he came to be convinced that it had sprung upon one of the birds, which had flown away with it. As he is a person of uncommonly acute observation and strong sense, I have the utmost confidence in the correctness of his judgment. The conclusion is, that the stoat knew quite well what it was about, and would keep its hold until it came to the ground again, under similar circumstances with the eagle. The matchless agility and comparative strength of this bold little creature, would enable it to save itself during its falls: before which took place, it had probably, as in the former instance, destroyed the life of its more harmless prey."

Trained up as we have been, in the ardent love of liberty, and a reverence for its name, we were early taught to extend our abhorrence of captivity to the poor birds and other animals, which children are often permitted to cage and fetter at their will. The consequence is, that even now we have little charity for bird-catchers, and little sympathy with bird-keepers; but of all the imprisoned birds we have ever seen, none have appeared to us so forlorn and melancholy as a caged eagle—a monarch in captivity.

THE IMPRISONED EAGLE.

Oh! 'twas a mean and dastard thing
To bind the mountain-eagle's wing:
A tyrant's forge the fetters framed,
And tyranny the deed proclaimed.
My spirit sickens when I see
That noble bird in his misery.
Break, break, the kingly eagle's chain,
And give him to the skies again.

His powerful wing that nature gave,
Sublime o'er mountain tops to wave,
Far sailing round the loftiest peak,
The home of princely sires to seek;
That powerful wing now drooping low,
Folds round him like a robe of woe.
O break the kingly eagle's chain,
And give him to the skies again.

Once he loved on the sun to gaze,
But now he shuns the dazzling blaze ;
His eye is dimmed, and a feebler light
Suits best the captive eagle's sight.
Oh! were he free, his glance would dare
The vivid lightning's fervid glare.
Break, break, the kingly eagle's chain,
And give him to the skies again.

'Twas the thought of a dastard mind,
The eagle's free-born wing to bind;
Freeman, if freedom's honoured name,
The homage of thy heart can claim,
Unclose the prisoner's grated door,
And let him far and freely soar.
Break, break, the kingly eagle's chain,
And give him to the skies again.

ORDER ACCIPITRES.

The Common, Peregrine, or Passerine Falcon.

Falco communis.—GMEL. F. Peregrinus.—LINN.

THE falcons, properly so called, have been commonly distinguished as the noble birds of prey. They are thus named, because they have been trained by man to follow the chase; which it was the fashion of the time, when falconry was in use, to call a noble sport, since it was a game

confined to nobles and men of high station. "The peregrine falcon," says Cuvier, "is the celebrated species which has given its name to falconry. It inhabits all the north of the globe, and builds in the steepest rocks. Its flight is so rapid, that there is scarcely any part of the world it does not visit. It pounces on its prey vertically, as if it fell from the clouds." The male is used against magpies, and other small birds; the female against pheasants, and even hares. The female is usually one third larger than the male, which is therefore, in the language of falconry, called a *tercel*. This beautiful bird is rendered familiar to our thoughts, by the frequent references to it in those chronicles and tales of other times, which bring before us the picturesque sport of falconry, now an amusement rarely heard of. Time was, when princes and chieftains looked on it as the noblest of their recreations in the "piping time of peace." Gay and gallant was the train that issued forth from palace, and castle, and ancient hall—the dwellings of our fore-fathers—in pursuit of this animating amusement. Much of evil was there mingled in those festive scenes; and we do not wish to recall them to a new existence, but rather to look back on them as picturesque memorials of the past, as we dwell on other traces of the feudal

times—the ruined tower, and the castle moat. There have been repeated attempts to revive the sport, but with very limited success. A few years ago, a young officer might be seen driving round the neighbourhood of Blackheath, in a fashionable tilbury, with a number of falcons perched about on the edge of his carriage : and occasionally you might see him practising them in flight according to the falconer's art. But it seems to have been an ephemeral fancy, which soon passed away, and found few followers. The falcon, the jer-falcon, the kestril, merlin, hobby, and some others of the same family, were trained for this sport. They were taken early from the nest, and gradually trained to obey the voice of man ; to fly at his command in pursuit of game, and return at his call. In order to render them tame and docile, they were kept in darkness by having their eyes covered with a hood, which could be removed at the pleasure of the keeper. Bands of soft supple leather were passed round their legs, to which a ring and cord were attached. By this cord they were fastened to a tether, and when taken out by the falconer, the cord was held in his hand. The leather bands were called jesses. When taken out into the fields for the purpose of hawking, every falcon rode on the hand of the falconer or his attend-

ants, hooded. When the prey was seen, the falconer removed the hood, and at his cry of *leurre*, the noble bird sprung into the air, and discerning, amid the birds, the species he had been trained to hunt, he selected his victim, pursued with rapid wing, struck it to the ground, and then returned at his master's call, to resume his station on his hand.

The falcon can be trained in fifteen days or a month for the chase, when taken from the nest. The merlins, however, are by far the most familiar and docile of the race. They do not require to be hooded, and are easily trained to hunt larks, blackbirds, quails, and partridges. This bird was particularly appropriated to the use of the ladies; and when the fair huntress rode forth on her palfrey, amid the gallant train from her father's hall, the merlin sat on her wrist, while the less gentle species obeyed the call, and rested on the glove of the knight, who rode at her side. This sport was the chosen amusement of our kings and princes, from the time of Alfred, to the reign of king John. But it especially prevailed in this country, from the days of that mighty hunter, William the Conqueror, down to the time of the last-mentioned monarch. "The figure of a hawk upon the left hand," says Henry, the historian, "was the mark by which painters

in those times, distinguished persons of high rank, of both sexes, from their inferiors; which is a sufficient proof that their fondness for, and frequent use of that bird, was universally known. So great a value did the princes and nobility of Europe, in that period, set upon their hawks, that they constantly carried them with them in all their journies, and sometimes into battle; and would not part with them, even to procure their own liberty when they were taken prisoners. The truth is, to resign his hawk was one of the most dishonourable actions of which a nobleman could be guilty, and was considered a voluntary resignation of his nobility."*

THE SONG OF THE FALCON.

Time was, when fettered with jesses and hood,
Compelled to share in the sports of men,
In the presence of princes and warriors I stood,
And they called me the noble falcon then.
With ladies and knights I followed the chase,
And they deemed that mine was a noble race.

Where the monarch lived in his royal towers,
Where the chieftain dwelt with his warlike crew,
Where the fair ladies sat in their courtly bowers,
There ever the falcon and merlin flew.
With the brave and the lovely I followed the chase,
And they said that mine was a noble race.

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* Henry's History of Great Britain.

On the slender wrist of the high-born dame,
The well trimmed merlin rested then;
At the chieftain's call the falcon came,
And knew his voice 'mid a thousand men.
With horse and hound I followed the chase,
And they lauded the falcon's noble race.

But I'm nobler now, that far and free,
Unfettered by toils and trammels like these;
I sail abroad over land and sea,
And follow the chase wherever I please.
No bell on my foot, no hood on my brow,
I am truly the noble falcon now.

ORDER ACCIPITRES.

Wood Owl. Tawny Owl. Brown Owl.

Strix Stridula.—LINN.

THE tawny owl is found in England, and many other parts of Europe. It inhabits woods, and usually builds its nest in hollow trees. It is this species of owl that utters the cry, so well imitated by the syllables *tee-whit* or *too-whit*, and the hollow shuddering kind of note *too-whoo*, of which the syllables are lengthened by a tremulous prolongation, that seems expressive of fear or horror.

While the eagle and falcon seek their food, and pursue their chase of the smaller animals, in the broad light of day, the owl, who is also a bird of prey, does not come forth in search of his, till the approach of night: he is therefore called a *nocturnal* bird of prey. In the day he shelters himself in a hollow tree, a barn, a ruinous tower, or any other quiet hiding-place he can find; for his eyes are so formed, that he cannot bear the full light of day. Unlike the eagle, who gazes on the noontide sun, the owl can only see to search its prey in the dim twilight, or when the landscape is lighted up by the soft radiance of the moonbeams. Even then his sight is far from being piercing, like the eagle's. But to supply this deficiency, he is so formed, that instead of descending on loud winnowing wings on his prey, which might give them time to escape from him in the dimmer distance, he moves on noiseless pinions. His wings are so peculiarly light and downy, that they make scarcely any sound in passing through the air. He glides silently round the house, or skims along the meadows, pouncing on his prey, and rapidly devouring the little birds, mice, &c. which he encounters in his circuit.

There is a large white owl, the snowy owl, found in many of the northern parts of Europe,

and sometimes, though rarely, seen in England and Scotland. This bird the Tartars hold in great reverence, in consequence of an adventure which they say befell their great leader Jenghis Khan. That prince, with a small army, was surprised and put to flight by his enemies. He concealed himself from his pursuers in a wood. They followed him into his retreat, and would, in all probability, have discovered him, had not an owl settled on the bush under which he was hidden. It was supposed impossible that so shy a bird would perch close to a place where a human being was concealed. No search was made under the spot where the owl settled, and thus the prince escaped from the hands of his enemies. From that day his countrymen held the bird sacred, and every one wore a plume of the feathers of the white owl on his head. To this day, the Kalmucs continue the custom on all great festivals; and some tribes have an idol in the form of an owl, to which they fasten the legs of the real bird.

SONG OF THE OWL.

In hollow trees, or ivy bowers,
I love to pass the sultry hours,
But when the flowers are bathed in dew,
I come forth and cry, *too-whit, too-whoo.*

When the sun hath set in the west,
When the thrush is gone to his nest,
When woodland sounds are faint and few
I come forth and cry, *too-whit, too-whoo.*

What time the bat comes forth to play,
I sail abroad on pinions grey;
I come my needful work to do,
And cry as I fly, *too-whit, too-whoo.*

Then I skim round the barn and house,
Then I hunt the little field-mouse;
Then I chase the frog through the dew,
And cry as I fly, *too-whit, too-whoo.*

ORDER ACCIPITRES.

The Great Horned Owl.

Strix Virginia—Wilson.

This is a very large species of owl, found in Virginia, and various other parts of North America. It feeds on young rabbits, squirrels, rats, mice, partridges, and small birds of various kinds. Its deep boding notes, heard in the night amid the woods, fall on the ear of the traveller with solemn and appalling cadence. Wilson, the most interesting of all our writers on ornithology, who had himself often travelled companionless through the solitudes of North America, gives

the following animated description of the habits of this bird of the wilderness :—" His favourite residence is in the dark solitudes of deep swamps, covered with a growth of gigantic timber. Here, as soon as evening draws on, and mankind retire to rest, he sends forth such sounds, as seem scarcely to belong to this world, startling the solitary pilgrim as he slumbers by his forest fire, 'making night hideous.' Along the mountainous shores of the Ohio, and amidst the deep forests of Indiana, alone, and reposing in the woods, this ghostly watchman has frequently warned me of the approach of morning, and amused me with his singular exclamations. Sometimes sweeping down and around my fire, uttering a loud and sudden *Waugh O! Waugh O!* sufficient to have startled a whole garrison. He has other nocturnal solos no less melodious ; one of which very strikingly resembles the half-suppressed screams of a person suffocating, and cannot fail of being exceeding entertaining to a lonely, benighted traveller, in the midst of an Indian wilderness."

THE VIRGINIAN OWL.

When wand'ring afar in the woods of the west,
The traveller pauses at night-fall to rest,

He kindles his fire, and the evening breeze
Sends the flickering light 'mid the forest-trees,
Cheered by the genial warmth it has shed,
He lies down to rest on his leafy bed;
And sweetly he sleeps, till a sudden scream
Breaks on his slumber, and chases his dream.
He wakes, and the note of the night-flying bird,
Waugh O! Waugh O! round his watch-fire is heard,
And he knows that the forest-warder is he,
Keeping his guard round the traveller's tree.
'Watchman, what of the night?" he cries,
And closes again his wearied eyes.

Children of luxury, come hither and see,
How the pilgrim can rest by the forest-tree;
Though the night-falling dews descend on his brows,
Yet sweetly he sleeps beneath the green boughs.
Calmly he rests, till the night-bird again,
Rouses him up with his far sounding strain.
Notes of deep omen, that well might affright,
The wanderer that rests by that lonely light.
He wakes, and the voice of the night-flying bird,
Waugh O! Waugh O! round his watch-fire, is heard.
But he knows that the forest-warder is he,
Keeping his guard round the traveller's tree.
" Watchman, what of the night?" he cries,
And closes again his wearied eyes.

THE SECOND ORDER.

PASSERES.

The order Passeres is the most numerous of the entire class. It embraces all the birds which are neither swimmers, nor waders, nor climbers, nor rapacious, nor gallinaceous. The Passeres have neither the violent character of the birds of prey, nor the fixed regimen of the Gallinacea, or of the water-fowl. Their food consists of insects, fruits, and grains. It is more exclusively graniverous in proportion to the thickness of the bill; and more exclusively insectivorous as the latter is more attenuated. Some, which possess a very strong bill, are even found to pursue small birds.—*Cuvier.*

[It will be observed, that in arranging the Passeres, we have followed the order of the French naturalist, though it has not been thought necessary to notice his numerous divisions of genus and sub-genus.]

ORDER PASSERES.

The Bell-Bird. Campanero.

Ampelis Carunculata.

THIS is another of the beautiful and curious birds found in the forests of South America; and rarely seen or heard, save by those

travellers whose wanderings have led them into the deep recesses of the transatlantic wilderness. One such wanderer has given to the world an animated narrative of his singular and interesting pilgrimage: and we quote from his amusing work the following account of the campanero.

"The celebrated campanero of the Spaniards, is called Dara by the Indians, and Bell-bird by the English. He is about the size of a jay. His plumage is as white as snow. On his forehead rises a spiral tube, nearly three inches long. It is jet black, dotted all over with small white feathers. It has a communication with the palate, and when filled with air, looks like a spire; when empty, it becomes pendulous. His note is loud and clear, like the sound of a bell, and may be heard at the distance of three miles.

"In the midst of the extensive wilds, generally on the dried top of an aged mora, almost out of gun-reach, you will see the campanero. No sound or song from any of the winged inhabitants of the forest, not even the clearly pronounced, "Whip-poor-Will," from the goat-sucker, cause such astonishment as the toll of the campanero. With many of the feathered race he pays the common tribute of a morning and an evening song: and even when the meridian sun has shut in silence the mouths of

almost the whole of animated nature, the campanero still cheers the forest. You hear his toll, and then a pause for a minute; then another toll, and then a pause again; and then a toll, and again a pause. Then he is silent for six or eight minutes, and then another toll, and so on. Acteon would stop in mid chase, Maria would defer her evening song, and Orpheus himself would drop his lute, to listen to him—so sweet, so novel, and romantic, is the toll of the pretty snow-white campanero."*

THE CAMPANERO, OR BELL-BIRD.

The morning light is round me spread,
And I must quit my forest bed.
A thousand strains of varied song
Are floating forth these shades among,
And seem as hymns of praise, to rise
In one full chorus to the skies.
And hark! a welcome sound I hear,
The matin-bell is chiming clear—
Ah! I hear it toll again—
It is the campanero's strain,
From the lofty mora tree,
Tolling loud and solemnly.

It stirs the pilgrim's heart to rise,
And yield his morning sacrifice
To Him who kept him thro' the night,
And brings again the morning light.

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* See Waterton's Wanderings.

On the green turf I kneel and pray,
That he would bless my onward way;
That wheresoe'er my path is found,
Heaven's gracious dews may fall around.
And then the pilgrim's prayers ascend
For every dear and distant friend:
And while beneath the forest glade,
His lonely orisons are made,
The campanero solemnly
Is tolling from the mora tree.

And when the daylight dies away,
And evening brings her tempered ray,
The campanero's solemn strain
Falls on his listening ear again.
Sweet as the chime of vesper bell,
It seems of evening prayers to tell:
He thinks of friends, far, far away,
Who for the lonely wanderer pray.
That thought has banished half his care,
He joins with theirs his fervent prayer,
And seems, amid the twilight dim,
To hear them chaunt the vesper hymn;
While from the lofty mora tree,
That forest-bell tolls solemnly.

ORDER PASSERES.

The Throstle, Thrush, or Mavis.

Turdus Musicus.—Linn.

Confining ourselves, as we have done, to narrow limits, it will be necessary to leave some of our sweetest song-birds unnoticed. But we

THRUSH.

would not willingly pass by the thrush—that joyous herald of the joyous spring. In the very dawn of spring he pours forth his sweet and varied strains from the tops of the highest trees. Before the primroses have unfolded their pale blossoms, or the bursting buds begun to tinge the woods with a shade of green, we hear his full clear notes. To us, the continued and far heard song of the early thrush, is associated with our earliest enjoyment of the pure air and sunshine, on the pleasant mornings of spring. In those cheering hours of brightness, which break on us after the clouds and darkness of the winter, fraught with hopeful anticipations and images of coming joy, who is there that has not welcomed the thrush's song with delight? As his animated strains resound through the valley, he seems to call on the other warblers of the grove to rouse from their lethargy, and join their notes of rejoicing with his.

There are four species of thrush in this country. The song-thrush, the missel-thrush, the redwing, or wind-thrush, and the fieldfare. The song-thrush is the most common species, both in this country and in France, where it commits great havoc in the vineyards on the approach of the vintage season, by feeding on the ripe grapes. In France it is certainly a migratory bird, quit-

ting that country immediately after the vintage is over; but with us this does not seem to be the case. It is said, there are no birds for which more snares are set, than thrushes; and this not merely to secure them as singing birds, but also as articles of food. They are considered a delicacy when in good condition.

With us, the thrush is heard as early as February, and continues to sing till the end of July, or beginning of August. And here we cannot but confess the chagrin we feel at being compelled to relinquish a delightful anecdote of the thrush which we had extracted from the Magazine of Natural History, and prepared for our own especial purpose. But, lo! the writer of the Architecture of Birds, has forestalled us, and appropriated the story to his own use. We are half inclined to quarrel with him for this, much as we are disposed to commend his book. Alas! for us, in the present day of endless scribbling and countless authorship, every ill-fated writer is in danger of treading on the heels of another, and feels himself forced either to keep contentedly in the back-ground, or push his fellow-traveller uncivilly from the pavement. Eh bien! of the two evils the first mentioned is, in our estimation, the least. So, adieu to the thrush story for us! Our readers will find it in the Magazine

of Natural History, for May, 1830; and in the Architecture of Birds.

THE SONG OF THE THRUSH.

Ere the morning light
Had chased the night,
Oh! did ye not hear a wild trilling song,
Floating the op'ning vallies among?
From dawn of day,
That warbling lay
Seem'd as though it would charm the darkness away

Hark, how the air rings!
'Tis the mavis sings;
And merrily, merrily sounds her voice,
Calling on vallies and hills to rejoice;
For winter is past,
And the stormy blast
Is hastening away to the northward at last.

Awake! land and sea,
And rejoice with me;
Awake! she cries, from your winter's repose,
Awake! for the south wind softly blows;
Wake, birds of the bowers,
The moments are ours,
Wake! wake! and welcome the season of flowers.

Awake! and sing,
For the joyous spring,
Is hanging green wreaths on the forest-trees,
And shedding sweet odours on every breeze.
Wake, birds of song!
Why linger so long?
Wake! wake! and rejoice with our merry throng.

ORDER PASSERES.

Mocking Bird. Mocking Thrush.

Turdus polyglottus.

THIS amusing inhabitant of the American woods is called, by the Mexicans, "the bird of four hundred languages." It derives its name from the talent it possesses of imitating the songs of other birds. Its own natural song is sweet and varied, but to this it adds the notes of almost all the other birds it hears in the extensive forests and savannahs of America. Its imitations do not merit the name of mocking, since it does not caricature the songs of other birds, but copies them with much skill and taste, throwing in notes of his own at intervals, and giving to the borrowed strain added grace and harmony.

Waterton, who had many opportunities of observing this bird in its native haunts, thus describes it: "The cassique, or mocking-bird, is larger than the starling. He courts the society of man, but disdains to live by his labours. When nature calls for support, he repairs to the neighbouring forest, and there partakes of the

fruits and seeds which she has produced in abundance for her aërial tribes. When his repast is over, he returns to man, and pays the little tribute which he owes him for his protection: he takes his station close to his house, and there, for hours together, pours forth a succession of imitative notes. His own song is sweet, but very short. If a toucan be yelping in the neighbourhood, he drops it, and imitates him. Then he will amuse his protector with the cries of the different species of the woodpecker; and when the sheep bleat, he will distinctly answer them. Then comes his own song again, and if a puppy-dog, or a guinea-fowl, interrupt him, he takes them off admirably, and by his different gestures during the time, you would conclude that he enjoys the sport. The cassique is gregarious, and imitates any sound he hears with such exactness, that he goes by no other name than that of mocking-bird amongst the colonists. At breeding time, a number of these pretty choristers resort to a tree near the planter's house, and from its outside branches weave their pendulous nests. So conscious do they seem that they never give offence, and so little suspicious are they of receiving any injury from man, that they will choose a tree within forty yards from his house, and occupy the branches so low down,

that he may peep into the nests. The cassique may be said to be a model of symmetry in ornithology, the proportions are so fine. On each wing he has a bright yellow spot, and his rump, belly, and half the tail, are of the same colour: all the rest of the body is black. His beak is the colour of sulphur, but it fades in death."*

This bird defends its eggs and young, with singular courage, from the attacks of its enemies, whether birds of prey or reptiles. In Audubon's magnificent work on the birds of America, is a beautiful picture of mocking-birds, defending their nest from a rattlesnake. Mr. A. has been studying the habits of the birds of his country, in the midst of their native haunts, for twenty-five years, it is said; and his animated sketches are made from the life, and tell their own story to the eye of the spectator.

THE MOCKING-BIRD.

Beneath the mighty forest oak,
Unshaken by the woodman's stroke,
With heat and weariness oppress'd,
The western traveller sinks to rest,
And listens, from his sheltering tree,
Bird of a thousand songs, to thee.

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* See Waterton's Wanderings, p. 117.

NIOLE or GOLDEN THRUSH.

Notes that to other birds belong,
Thou minglest with thy own sweet song;
Harps that the wayward breezes sweep,
Alone such varying music keep.
Whence is the changeful harmony,
That flows, sweet western bird, from thee?

Thou dost not mock, but copiest well
The warblers that around thee dwell;
And when the traveller near thee strays,
Thou giv'st him freely all thy lays;
For this, a pilgrim's blessing be,
Bird of a thousand songs, on thee!

ORDER PASSERES.

The Oriole Loriot, or Golden Thrush.

Oriolus Galbula.

This bird is a little larger than a blackbird. It passes the autumn and winter in the warm climate of Africa, and comes into Europe in the spring. It is not often seen in England, but in France it is very abundant. It arrives there about the middle of spring, and stays all the summer. At first it feeds on caterpillars and insects, completely clearing the trees on which it alights of these destructive little creatures; but as soon as the figs and cherries are ripe, it at-

tacks them most voraciously, and often does as much mischief in the cherry-orchards by devouring the fruit, as it did good by freeing the trees from insects. It has a singular cry, which has been supposed to resemble the word *oriole*, or *loriot*, from whence its name is derived. Some persons in France have imagined that the notes of its song sound like the words, "Louisat bonne merises." Others have persuaded themselves that it articulates

> "C'est le compère loriot,
> Qui mange les cerises, et laisse le noyau."

The nest of this beautiful bird is singularly pretty: it is made of straw, flax, wool, and moss, and lined with the softest materials, wool, spiders' webs, the silky nest of caterpillars, and feathers. This nest is fastened firmly to the branch of a tree, from which it hangs suspended like pendent fruit.

THE ORIOLE'S SONG.

Where the Garonne pours its stream,
Where the Seine's broad waters gleam,
Where the Loire's sweet river flows,
Where the dark green olive grows,
There the golden oriole flies,
And "*Louisat bonne merises*," he cries.

ROBIN.

Once the minstrel boy was seen,
Wandering through these valleys green:
Silent is the minstrel's lay,
The minstrel race have pass'd away;
But still the golden oriole flies,
And "*Louisat bonne merises*," he cries.

'Tis a pleasant life he leads,
In the orchards, groves, and meads;
Richly does the oriole fare,
On the fruits he gathers there;
While far on golden wing he flies,
And "*Louisat bonne merises*," he cries.

When the winter strips the meads,
Unto milder climes he speeds:
With the balmy gales of spring,
Back he comes on golden wing,
Then through the land again he flies,
And "*Louisat bonne merises*," he cries.

ORDER PASSERES.

Robin Redbreast.

Motacilla rubecula.—LINN. Sylvia rubecula.—LATHAM.

THIS little bird, so well known, and so universal a favourite, needs no description. In summer he is seldom seen, but when winter has stripped the woods of their foliage, and the fields of their flowers, then he makes his appearance, and cheers

table, and commenced a brisk attack on the bread and butter, or toast, bringing to the meal an excellent appetite, which the invalid might well envy him. Nothing could exceed the perfect ease and unfettered enjoyment of the little bird. He seemed to feel himself on the footing of complete intimacy and companionship with his entertainer. He ate his fill, plumed his wing, and sung his pleasant song, evidently fearing no evil while no other person was in the room; but the moment a step was heard, he flew away to his hiding-place and remained unseen, until the dinner-hour found the invalid once more alone. Then he came forth again, making his approaches in the same interesting manner as at breakfast. It happened that a part of the sick man's daily food at that time was ground rice pudding. Of this the bird was particularly fond, and never failed to have a portion allotted to him. But he did not confine himself to the pudding. He would perch on a slice of bread, and feed heartily on it, digging a large hole in it with his bill. Then he would hop on to the edge of a water-glass, and deliberately sip the clear liquid, thus pledging his host with all the ease of a bidden guest. His meal ended, he would fly to the back of a chair near the fire: there he would remain, enjoying the warmth, dressing his feathers, and

warbling his "wood notes wild," as gaily as if he sat in summer bowers, till the approach of another person drove him back to his retreat. It was expected, that when the weather became colder, he would establish himself there for the winter. Indeed, he had already repeatedly passed the night in the apartment, taking up his lodging on the top of the wardrobe. For the present, however, he was usually only a day visitor. As night approached, he generally found opportunity to flit away, and seek his old roosting place in barn or shed. The morning saw him again, an attendant on the sick couch. Again he shared the breakfast and the dinner, and repaid his entertainer by his cheering strains. He did not always remain stationary in the room, but occasionally made an excursion into the nursery. There he was at all times a welcome guest, and seemed to be as much at ease as in the invalid's chamber; feeding fearlessly on the crumbs that fell from the children's table. This pleasant intercourse with the little bird had been going on for some time, when all at once poor robin's visits ceased, and it is feared that in one of his excursions to the nursery, he fell a prey to the pet cat, which was also accustomed to share the children's bounty.

There is something particularly calculated to awaken kindly feelings for the little bird, in the

perfect confidence he reposes in us; so that he is safe, even when within the reach of man. There is too an additional security for the robin, arising out of the various proverbs and legends, which in some sort cast a charm around him, and seem, as by a powerful spell, to protect him from injury. Perhaps no one thing has tended more to produce this effect, than the pathetic ballad of the "Babes in the Wood;" that touching story, which has called forth more tears of tender pity in childhood, than any other nursery tale in our language. Certain it is, that this little bird is held sacred by all. The school-boy who ventures to do him violence, must be a hardy fellow. Such a deed of unwonted cruelty would mark him with a brand of disgrace in the eyes of his companions. His sociability with man has acquired for him, in many countries, some familiar name: with us, he is Robin Redbreast; in Sweden he is Tomi Liden; in Germany he is Thomas Gierdet; while the Norwegian peasant gives him the name, Peter Ronsmad. Except in the summer, when he shares his home in the wood with his mate and his young, he is always seen alone.

Robins are never met with in flocks under any circumstances. They are found all over Europe, from Spain and Italy, to Sweden. They make their nest generally near the ground, in the roots

of trees, tufts of ivy or thick bushes, concealing it carefully from observation. They are sometimes known to cover it completely with leaves, leaving only an entrance in an oblique direction, and stopping it up with a leaf when they go out. They rear two or three broods in the year. The hen deposits from five to seven eggs in the nest, and her companion shares with her in the trouble of hatching them, sitting on them in the middle of the day, when she goes in search of food.

We are compelled to admit, that robin, with all his attractions, and all his amiable qualities, is not celebrated for exhibiting a spirit of love and forbearance towards his brethren of the ruby breast. He is, in fact, one of the most pugnacious and quarrelsome of birds. Few persons can have observed his habits, without discerning him many times engaged in desperate battles. We well remember seeing a most dexterous mouser and bird-catcher of the feline race, rush in at the open door of a dining-room, where a family party was assembled, and run under the table with two robins, which she had just pounced upon in the garden, while in the act of fighting. So earnestly were they engaged in the contest, that they did not perceive her approach; and she actually seized them both by their necks at one gripe, their heads sticking out at either side of her mouth. A lady

seized Grimalkin as she rushed under the table, and compelled her to relinquish her hold before the robins were materially injured, and they instantly flew off as if nothing had happened. Whether they had courage to renew the combat after an event so alarming to both parties, is not known.

The robin has some notes quite distinct from his cheerful song. One cry, which is often repeated in the evening and morning, can be heard at a considerable distance, and is loud and abrupt. He has another, which is a sort of chirp. It seems to be a note of call, and may be so well imitated by sucking the finger, as to assemble all the redbreasts in the neighbourhood.

THE ROBIN.

Pretty bird, with thy ruby breast,
  Thou art not of a gentle race,
And yet, to all a welcome guest,
  Thou hast a high and honour'd place.
There is a tale the peasants tell,
Which round thee casts a guardian spell.

Who does not love thee, pretty bird?
  The story told in earliest years,
The legend in our childhood heard,
  Unlocking all our infant tears:
That mournful story, lov'd so well,
Around thee casts a sacred spell.

NIGHTINGALE.

Who does not love the birds that flew
  Round the poor babes' cold forest bed,
With leaves their lifeless limbs to strew,
  And sing a requiem o'er the dead?
Though but a tale the nurses tell,
It guards thee with a sacred spell.

Robin, thou art a welcome guest:
  When winter comes with chilling gale,
Then in thy ruby corset drest,
  Thee as a winter friend we hail.
Then fondly on the tale we dwell,
That round thee casts its guardian spell.

Now thou hast pour'd thy parting song
  Amid the leafless forest bow'rs;
A dirge o'er summer's dying throng,
  Of falling leaves and faded flow'rs.
And having sung thy sweet farewell,
Art come thy pleasant tale to tell;
And in the peasant's cottage dwell,
While winter reigns o'er flood and fell.

ORDER PASSERES.

The Nightingale.

Motacilla Luscinia.

The nightingale, the most celebrated of all our birds, is about six inches in length. Cuvier observes: "Every body knows this songster of the night, and the melodious and varied sounds with which it charms the forest." Here, however, the naturalist errs. Many people do not

live within reach of its melody; and there are multitudes, even in this country, who have never heard the liquid notes of the nightingale, poured forth from woods and thickets in those calm, sweet evenings we sometimes enjoy in the latter part of April and May. Though well known to the inhabitants of the southern, eastern, and midland counties of England, it is rarely seen in the northern parts of the island, nor so far west as Devonshire and Cornwall. Neither is it met with in many parts of the Principality of Wales. Even the fertile and richly wooded Glamorganshire, which seems to abound in such retreats as the nightingale would select, is rarely visited by this most accomplished melodist of the groves.

The nightingale is a bird of passage. It comes to us about the middle of April, and remains till the autumn, when the coldness of the atmosphere, and deficiency of food, warn it to take its flight to other countries. It then passes over to Africa. Some nightingales retire into Barbary; others take up their winter abode in Lower Egypt. Sonnini has seen several during the winter, feeding in the fertile plains of the Delta; and has also been eye-witness of their passage through some of the Islands of the Archipelago. So powerfully is the impulse to

emigrate felt by these birds, that even such as are retained in captivity, and whose habits must be much changed, evince great uneasiness, and are evidently much agitated as the season for emigration approaches. Unlike the swallows, and many others, this bird does not wait to consult with his companions, or to hold council with the assembled families of his tribe, before he fixes the time for his departure on his long and perilous journey. Naturally shy and solitary, as soon as the changing season warns him that the time of scarcity approaches, the defenceless little creature sets forth alone on his travels, and steers his unerring course to the distant shores. By a wonderful instinct he is aware that a softer atmosphere and abundance of food, will repay the labour of his voyage. Arrived at the point at which he aimed, he rejoices in the provisions made for his simple wants, until another change of season reminds him that the period for his return to Europe is arrived. Again he sets forth alone, crosses deserts and oceans, and comes back a solitary visitant to his old retreats. At first, he shelters himself in hedges on the borders of gardens and cultivated lands, where he finds the most abundant supply of food: but as soon as the verdure of the woods and forests begins to thicken, he

retreats to their shade, and shrouds himself in their foliage. The favourite haunt of the nightingale is on a sheltered hill-side; and it is said evidently to prefer the spot where there is an echo, and more especially where there is a running stream. In this last respect, its taste is similar to that of many others of the feathered race; a circumstance to which the royal psalmist thus beautifully alludes: "He sendeth springs into the valleys which run among the hills. By them shall the fowls of the heavens have their habitation, which sing amongst the branches." In such a spot it is that he makes his summer abode, after having selected a mate from those who, like himself, have returned singly and alone to the country wherein they build their nests and rear their young. Once mated, he rarely strays very far from his chosen home. He has always two or three favourite trees on which he chiefly delights to sing, and on which he gives out all the compass of his delightful and harmonious voice. The tree nearest the nest is the one he especially prefers. The nest itself is made with little art, and is much less curious and beautiful than the nests of many other birds. It is composed of coarse weeds, dried leaves, and hair, and is so slightly bound together, that it falls to pieces as soon as it is

moved. It is usually placed near the ground, and contains four or five eggs, of a greenish-brown colour. While the hen-bird sits, her mate continues near her, brings her food in his bill, or keeps watch by her side, and sings her sweet songs from the neighbouring tree. As soon as the young birds have burst the shell, the nightingale ceases to sing, and both parents take equal care of them, feeding them with small worms, caterpillars, and the eggs of ants and other insects. They quit the nest before they are able to fly, and are then seen to follow their parents, jumping from branch to branch. As soon as they can flutter, the male bird relieves the female from all further care of them, and completes their education himself, till he can dismiss them from his charge as accomplished nightingales, to seek their own food, and add their sweet songs to the harmonies of the grove. Meanwhile, the hen-bird is engaged in preparing another nest, in which she rears a second brood before the summer is over, and sometimes, though rarely, a third. Such is the natural history of this little bird, which has been the theme of the poet's song in almost all ages, and the delight of all who love sweet sounds and touching symphonies. After its season of song is over, its change of note is as wonderful as it is

unatractive. "In calm weather, in the fine nights of spring," says a writer, from whom we have before quoted—the editor of Cuvier—"when its voice is heard alone, undisturbed by any other sound, nothing can be more ravishing and delightful. Then it developes, in their utmost plenitude, all the resources of its incomparable organ. But from the setting in of the summer solstice, it grows more sparing of its song. It is seldom heard, and when it is, there is neither animation nor constancy in its tones. In a few days, at this time, the song ceases altogether, and we hear nothing but hoarse cries, and a croaking sound, in which we should in vain endeavour to recognise the melodious Philomela."

Bird-fanciers have sometimes eagerly debated the comparative merits of the Surrey and Middlesex nightingales. It is said, the London bird-catchers give the preference to Surrey. We take it for granted, however, that the imaginative and delightful Isaac Walton, heard the Middlesex birds, and drew from them that admirable portraiture of their strains, which breathes the very soul of poetry. "He that at midnight, when the very labourer sleeps securely, should hear, as I have often done, the clear airs, the sweet descants, the natural rising

and falling, the doubling and redoubling of the nightingale's voice, might well be lifted above earth, and say, 'Lord, what music hast thou provided for saints in heaven, since thou affordest bad men such music on earth?'" However favourable the banks of the Thames may be to the music of the nightingales, we could say much of their harmonious songs in the beautiful beech-woods and tangled thickets of Hampshire, and in other song-abounding districts. But perhaps there are few places where they are heard more charmingly, or to greater advantage, than on the banks of the Avon, amidst the wooded recesses of St. Vincent's rocks, between Clifton and the mouth of the Severn. There are few persons familiar with that fine forest-like tract on the left bank of the river, known under the general denomination of Leigh Woods, who are not also acquainted with the sweet embowered ravine, running up from the very shore of the stream, to nearly the summit of the hill which has received, and well deserves, the name of Nightingale Valley. It is at all times a lovely spot; and we could scarcely wish our young friends a greater treat, amid the scenes of nature, than to visit this valley on one of those calm moonlight nights, when it resounds with the songs of the nightingales which have

taken up their abode amidst its green recesses. They are, indeed, to be heard all along that fine range of wood-covered rock.

Some years since, an American gentleman, arriving in England for the first time, entered it by the port of Bristol. It was evening before the vessel left the mouth of the Severn, to proceed up the river to the harbour. Worn out with the fatigue of a long and harassing voyage, he felt all the powers of mind and body exhausted, and the interest and excitement naturally caused by the first sight of a new country, seemed almost chased from his mind by his worn and jaded condition. The vessel advanced towards the river. The moon rose, it was the season of nightingales; and they poured forth their matchless strains on the ears of the delighted stranger, as he gazed with wonder and extacy on the beautiful scenery lighted up by the moonbeams. It was like a fabled scene of enchantment to him. His fatigue vanished. He forgot his toils, and his perils, and his weariness, and thought only what a land of sweet song and bright vision he was entering. On reaching the city the scene changed indeed. His feelings of exhaustion returned, and he sunk, almost as soon as landed, into the torpid rest of over-wearied nature. But never did he lose the delight-

ful impression of his moon-lighted entrance, and the ravishing song of birds whose notes he had never before heard; for America, among all her birds of bright plumage and varied melody, cannot boast our unrivalled nightingale.

THE NIGHTINGALE.

Beautiful nightingale, who shall recall
Thy exquisite strains, on the ear as they fall!
Gently as night-dews descend on the green,
Their source like the night-falling dews all unseen.
And every note has a cadence as sweet
As sounds that gush out where the calm waters meet;
Soul-thrilling tones in deep solitude heard,
When by light breezes the waters were stirr'd.
Thy home is the wood on the echoing hill,
Or the verdant banks of the forest rill:
And soft as the south-wind the branches among,
Thy plaintive lament goes floating along.

Beautiful nightingale, who shall pourtray
All the varying turns of thy flowing lay!
And where is the lyre, whose chords shall reply,
To the notes of thy changeful melody!
We may linger indeed, and listen to thee,
But the linked chain of thy harmony
It is not for mortal hand to unbind,
Nor the clue of thy mazy music to find.
Thy home is the wood on the echoing hill,
Or the verdant banks of the forest rill,
And soft as the south-wind the branches among,
Thy plaintive lament goes floating along.

ORDER PASSERES.

The Black-Cap.

Sylvia Atricapilla.—Lath. La Fauvette à tête noire.—Buff.

This blythe little bird visits us in the early days of April, and makes our gardens resound with its notes. So sweetly does it sing, that it has sometimes been called the mock nightingale. White describes it as having a full, sweet, deep, loud, and wild pipe, when flitting about from tree to tree; but he says it is, when calmly seated, heard to the greatest advantage. When pouring forth its full tide of song, it gives out strains of sweet, but inward melody, full of soft and gentle modulations, rivalled only by the nightingale. This tasteful observer of nature adds, that the wild sweetness of the black-cap's note, always brought to his recollection these lines in one of Shakespear's songs:

> "And tune his merry throat,
> Unto the wild bird's note."

The female black-caps do not arrive till a week or two after the male birds. As soon as

BLACK CAP.

they make their appearance, the male selects his mate, and looks about for a suitable place in which to build the nest. Having found a spot which pleases him, he appears to announce it to the female, by one of his sweetest and tenderest songs. The place chosen, is usually in the small bushes of eglantine, or hawthorn, or among the branches of the woodbine. The nest is slightly made of the dried stems and curled roots of grass, with a little hair, bound together with the cotton of plants. The eggs, five in number, are of a reddish-brown colour, with spots of deep morone. The black-cap is a bird of a most amiable and affectionate temper: not only does he most assiduously share in the labours of the hen-bird in a state of freedom, but when taken captive with his family, he continues to feed the young ones and the female; even forcing the latter to eat, when the misery she experiences from her loss of freedom, would lead her to refuse all sustenance. In time, he becomes also much attached to the person who takes care of him. He will call his attendant with a particular note, and when he sees him approach, his tones become more expressive of affection. Like the nightingale, the fauvette, within the walls of its prison, seems as sensible to the approach of the season of emigration, as when flying, with unfet-

tered wing, among his mates of the field. So greatly are they agitated during the autumnal nights, that many of them actually die in consequence. This unsettlement continues among the poor little captives until the month of November, when they become tranquil again, and continue so until the return of another season.

THE BLACK-CAP, OR FAUVETTE.

Oh! fair befall thee, gay fauvette,
With trilling song and crown of jet;
Thy pleasant notes with joy I hail,
Floating on the vernal gale.
Far hast thou flown on downy wing,
To be our guest in early spring:
In that first dawning of the year,
Pouring a strain as rich and clear
As is the blackbird's mellow lay,
In later hours of flowery May.

While April skies to grove and field,
Alternate shade and sunshine yield,
I hear thy wild and joyous strain,
And give thee welcome once again.
Come build within my hawthorn bower,
And shade thy nurslings with its flower;
Or where my wreathed woodbines twine,
Make there a home for thee and thine.
Now fair befall thee, gay fauvette,
With trilling song and crown of jet!

GOLDEN CRESTED WREN.

To thee a song of praise is due,
For thou art faithful, fond, and true.
Affection warm and firm as thine,
Which knows no varying nor decline,
The false and fleeting love might shame,
Of those who bear a nobler name;
And lordly man might learn from thee,
A lesson of fidelity.
Oh! fair befall thee, gay fauvette,
With trilling song and cap of jet!

ORDER PASSERES

The Golden-crested Wren.

Motacilla Regulus.—Linn.

The golden-crested wren is the smallest of all the British birds, and has sometimes been called the English humming bird. When stripped of its feathers, its body is about an inch long: with its feathers, it is a little more than three inches in length, and weighs only about seventy-six grains. It is so small that it can pass through the meshes of the nets, commonly used for catching small birds, and easily escapes from all cages. A leaf is sufficient to conceal it from the most piercing sight; which is probably the reason why they are so rarely seen in summer, when, no

doubt, there are abundance in the tall trees of our woods. Screened from observation by the thick foliage, we perceive them not; but as soon as the leaves fall, they are found in tolerable numbers, and are seen flying about, in small troops of from ten to twelve, in company with tit-mice and other little birds. This bird remains with us all the winter, and is a constant resident, even so far north as the Orkney Islands. It seems able to bear great extremes of temperature, as it is found all over Europe, and has also been met with in Asia and America. It feeds chiefly on small insects, in search of which it glides about with great swiftness, climbing rapidly from branch to branch, and holding itself with perfect ease in every position. Often you may see it, head downwards, suspended by its feet from the bough of a tree. It frequents oaks, elms, pines, firs, and willows. Its nest is principally composed of moss, and lined with the softest down; and it is curiously suspended from the branch of a tree, by means of a sort of cordage, formed of the same materials as the nest. There it hangs, a soft cradle for its young ones, rocked by the wind as it passes through the branches. In this nest there are six or eight little eggs, not larger than a pea. While the lady-wren sits on them, her mate, as is the case with so many other

birds, kindly sits by her side, and sings her his sweetest songs. When she is obliged to quit the nest in search of food, he takes her place, and keeps the eggs warm till her return.

THE GOLDEN-CRESTED WREN.

Gem-like bird, with thy golden crest,
Like lovely visions rarely seen,
Seldom we find thy place of rest,
Shrouded beneath the foliage green.
'Mid the dark groves of fir and pine,
Where chiefly thou lovest to dwell,
Sweet is that fairy note of thine,
As the chime of a silver bell;
That gently tells in a season of flowers,
Of the rapid flight of the pleasant hours;
And a single leaf of the forest tree,
Will serve as a sheltering screen for thee;
Concealing thee safely from every eye,
Until danger and fear have pass'd thee by.

Small as thou art, thou gem-like bird,
Yet thou hast made thy nest on high;
And there thy warbling voice is heard,
Singing thy children's lullaby.
Lovely bird, with thy golden crown,
A kind and tender nurse art thou,
Making thy nest of moss and down,
And hanging it on the bending bough.

There, rocked by the wave of the Zephyr's wings,
Amid the green branches it lightly swings;
And a few clustering leaves of the forest-tree,
Will serve to shelter thy cradle and thee;
Concealing thee safely from every eye,
Until danger and fear have pass'd thee by.

ORDER PASSERES.

Willow-Wren.

Motacilla Trochilus.

This is a very delicately formed, and beautiful little bird, not so small as the golden-crested wren, but still of fairy dimensions. Its movements are graceful and rapid; and it is in search of its insect prey, that, like the golden-crested wren, it exhibits the greatest agility. It frequents hedges and shrubberies. Should you have the good fortune to possess a retired garden, surrounded by fields and woods, you have a still better chance of seeing these fairy birds in your domains; and may amuse yourselves, as we have often done, with watching them as they glide swiftly about from tree to tree, and from flower to flower. A very pretty sight it is, to see them running rapidly up the trunks of the trees, and the stems of the smaller plants, in search of

WILLOW WREN.

insects, lightly stirring the leaves, and shaking the flower-bells as they pass along. The willow-wren does not build its nest in the trees, but on the ground. It is composed of moss and dried grass, and lined with hair and feathers. If you should discover a nest before the young birds are hatched, you will find in it six white eggs, beautifully spotted with red. But do not put your finger on either the nest or eggs, for so keen is the sensibility of this little bird, that if the nest has been touched in her absence, she discovers it, and immediately deserts it, to build another: fearful, it should seem, that he who has visited her nest to examine her eggs, may come again when they are hatched, to destroy her young ones, or carry them into captivity.

To the scientific friend from whom we have obtained the details of the furze-wren, we are indebted for the following note on the varieties of the willow-wren :—

"Bewick mentions three sorts of willow-wrens, and White (in his History of Selborne) gives interesting descriptions of these birds, but I think it requires further investigation. I have taken much pains to ascertain the fact, and cannot decide quite on there being three sorts. The yellow willow-wren is properly enough described: it is larger, and much yellower in colour, than the

common, and White describes the distinction of the smaller one by the noise, *chif-chaf, chif-chaf*, loud, and often repeated. I contend, both large and smaller, if not the yellow one also, make that noise. It is true, some willow-wrens appear rather smaller than the common sort, but I never have found any with black legs, as mentioned by that clever naturalist ; and their difference in size is very trifling."—W. K.

THE WILLOW-WREN.

Thou fairy bird, how I love to trace
The rapid flight of thy tiny race ;
I look from my lattice the branches among,
And see thee flit like a shadow along.
For the wild bee does not wave his wing
More lightly than thine, thou fairy thing.

Now thou art seen in the woodbine bower,
Gracefully gliding from flower to flower ;
Now climbing the stem of the asphodel,
Or the tall campanula's snowy bell.
And the wild bee does not wave his wing
More lightly than thine, thou fairy thing.

Come, fairy bird, with the glancing eye,
And graceful form, to my garden fly :
Thou com'st not to steal the nectar away,
But to search the stems for thy insect prey.
And the wild bee does not wave his wing,
More lightly than thine, thou fairy thing.

FURZE WREN.
(Le Pitchou de Provence)

Come, fairy bird, and my sheltering trees
Shall shield thy wing from the ruffling breeze:
Come, merrily flit through the fragrant bed,
And visit each flower by the summer dew fed.
Hail! sylph-like bird, on thy airy wing;
Fly hither, fly hither, thou fairy thing.

ORDER PASSERES.

The Furze-Wren, or Dartford Warbler.

Motacilla Provincialis.—Linn. Le Pitchou de Provence. —Buff.

This elegant little bird, though abundant in many parts of England, has hitherto been so little known to ornithologists, that even Bewick was unable to give more than a very meagre account of it. It has the colours of the robin, with a more graceful form. It is about five inches in length, of which the tail is about one half.*

We are indebted to the kindness of the ornithological friend before referred to, for the following detailed account of its habits, which we give in his own words.

"This is a very interesting bird, and far from

* See Bewick, vol. i. page 234.

being generally known. I have occasionally met with clever ornithologists, who have never seen it: the more extraordinary, as it is a frequenter of almost every district where furze-bushes grow. Bewick places it next the nightingale, from which I infer, he thought its habits similar to that bird; they are, however, very different. I have paid considerable attention to these little warblers, and consider them decidedly a species of wren. Their manner of flight, general motions, and great propensity for concealment, are all indicative of their relation to that family, but they do not flirt their tails quite so much as the wrens. They are so dark in colour, as to appear almost black when flying. The Dartford warbler, or furze-wren, as I would willingly call it, is so peculiar in evading sight, that although common in this neighbourhood, (the Sussex border of Surrey,) I have often been in pursuit of them for many successive months, without getting sight of a single bird; yet I have seldom been disappointed of seeing them, when hunting the furze for rabbits with beagles. These little dogs disturb them more than anything else. I have often tried beating the furze with a large stick, when I knew they were in the bushes, but could scarcely ever get them out that way. On the Brighton downs, where the groups of furze in

some places are thin and far apart, when these birds have taken shelter in a small patch of them, boys have been known to drive them from bush to bush, until they have tired them out, and fairly run them down. I have procured several that have fallen a sacrifice in that way. They seem quite out of their element when they cannot hide. I have known them caught by the hand in a single furze-bush, rather than quit it. Their last resource is to creep to the lowest part of the furze, and close to the ground; in which case I have known instances of their being trampled upon, the bush, a solitary one, being trodden all over in order to make them start from it. Bewick says they are supposed sometimes to winter with us: I am convinced they always winter with us. They are the least likely of any of the motacillas to be birds of passage, because, as I before observed, they live almost entirely in the thickest furze, which would, throughout the winter, afford them an ample supply of food, (insects of course,) and shelter from the bitterest storms. Early in the spring, the male birds are seen sitting on the tops of the furze, and singing sweetly. Their notes are somewhat similar to the common wren; more varied and lengthened, but not half so powerful, and rather plaintive.

"All I can say of the eggs and nests of the furze-wrens, must be surmise only. Some eggs brought me by boys, I have supposed might belong to these birds; but those of the willow and common wrens, also the tit-mice, assimilate so nearly, it is difficult to ascertain them separately, unless the birds and nests are watched. I cannot suppose the nest to be oval, nor does it follow it should be shaped thus like the nests of other wrens, because I think it would be an unnecessary provision, if placed in the thick furze, and that I have no doubt is the situation usually chosen for it. This is nearly all I know about these birds, except that, after long enquiry, I have found that they are known by men and boys where the furze is abundant, by the name of red eyes. You cannot do better than copy Bewick's description as to the size and colour of the birds in question."

W. K.

THE FURZE-WREN.

Bird of the desert, thy home may not be
In groves of Arabian spicery:
No dwelling hast thou in the fertile vale
Where clustering roses have scented the gale;
The waste places are thine, sweet warbling bird,
Thy notes of joy in the desert are heard.
My spirit is glad while I listen to thee;
There are songs in the wilderness also for me.

In the lonely wild thou hast made thy nest,
And the thorny gorse is thy place of rest,
Yet dost thou sit on its branches and sing,
Making the waste with thy melody ring.
Bird of the desert, who cheerest my way,
There's a lesson for me in thy joyous lay.
There are golden flowers on the thorny tree;
There are songs of the wilderness also for me.

Bird of the desert, I too have a song,
A hymn of joy, as I travel along:
The fairest flowers that my pathway adorn,
Spring up in the shade of some rankling thorn.
Strains of thanksgiving and praise be mine,
For blessings more lofty and lasting than thine.
My spirit is glad while I listen to thee;
There are songs in the wilderness also for me.

ORDER PASSERES.

The Yellow Wagtail.

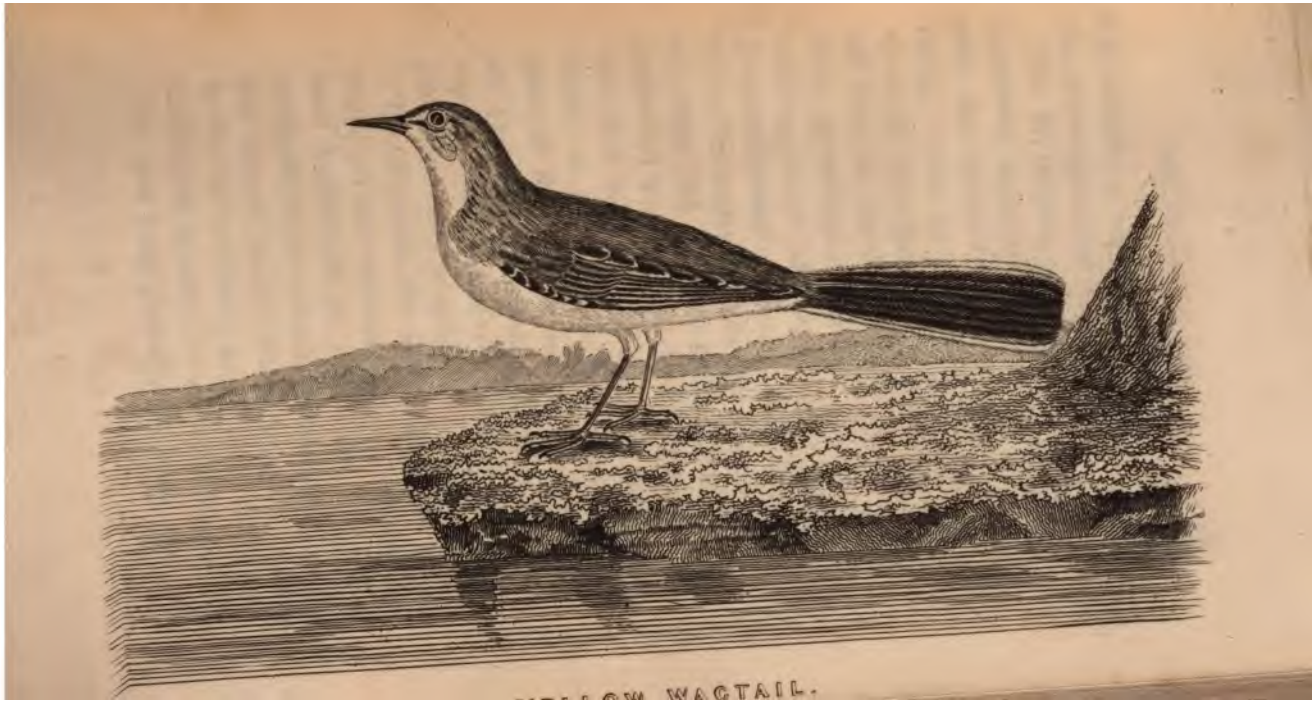
Motacilla Flava.—Linn. La Bergeronette de Printems.

Black-and-White Water-Wagtail.

Motacilla Alba. La Lavandière.

This sprightly race of birds, so common in all parts of the country, Bewick observes, may be easily distinguished by their brisk and lively movements, and by the great length of their tails, which they jerk up and down continually, deriving their name from this peculiarity in various European countries.

We have three species in England—the two mentioned above, and the grey wagtail, *Motacilla Boarula*. Of these, the yellow, is the most attractive to the eye, and deservedly ranks as one of the most elegant of our birds. The yellow wagtail is an early spring visitant to our meadows and corn-fields, where it frequently nestles. In the winter, it is said, by Bewick, to haunt the sides of brooks and streams, which do not freeze; yet some other ornithologists speak



of it decidedly as migrating from northern countries at the approach of winter.

The M. Boarula, on the contrary, makes his appearance amongst us at that season, and departs when the other wagtails come to us in the spring. Unlike the Motacilla Provincialis, from which we have just parted, the yellow wagtail does not make his abode in the lonely waste, or unfrequented heath. Guided by the unerring instinct implanted in their breasts by the great Author of Nature, these little birds fly to the cultivated lands best adapted to supply them with food, and follow in the tracks of flocks and herds, where the flies and other insects they seek may be the most abundantly found. It is from their thus frequenting the paths of the shepherd and the herdsman, that the French have given them the name of *Bergeronette*, adding to it that of *Printems*, from their early appearance in spring.

The *Motacilla Alba* or black-and-white water-wagtail, is more universally known, and is indeed more familiar with the human race. It is seen coutinually near our habitations during the spring and summer months, either flying and sporting in the air, or running nimbly along the ground, and leaping up after flies and other insects. Its ebon and ivory plumage, jet black and pure

white, greets our eyes in the field, by the way-side, on the village common, and the borders of ponds and streams. Little distrustful of man, it enters our gardens, running rapidly over the lawn, seeking for food. While yet the dew is on the grass, and the insect race have scarcely roused them from their slumbers, we see the sprightly bird scudding over the green turf in all directions. He flies fearlessly in the path of the labourer, and is not disturbed by the noisy merriment and gay sports of the children, tripping lightly in their neighbourhood while they play, as if he would willingly join in their gambols. Its favourite haunts are the shallow margins of running waters. In France it often approaches the washer-women while engaged in their labours on the banks of the streams, and seems, by the motion of its tail, to imitate their beating of the linen, from whence the French have given it the name of *la lavandière.* They make their nests on the ground, and lay five or six eggs of a bluish white, spotted with brown. Nothing can exceed their attention to their young, in which the male bird takes his share with the female. They defend them courageously when attacked, and like the lapwing and some other birds, will meet the enemy, fly around him, and seek by every means to mislead

him and withdraw his steps from the nest, which they often succeed in doing. If the nest and its cherished inmates should be captured, despite all their efforts, they are seen flying round the head of the spoiler, uttering piercing cries, as if to move him to compassion.

So careful are they to guard against the possibility of such an event, that they most scrupulously remove every thing from the neighbourhood of the nest, which could serve to point out its situation. So particular are they in this respect, that they have been known to carry away paper or straw, which has been laid as a mark to trace out the hiding-place. The principal part of these birds migrate in October; a few only remaining in this country. During the season in which they are absent from us, they are found in great numbers in Egypt, and likewise in Senegal, but they pass away from those countries in the spring, and return to our climate about the end of March.* In a book which aims rather to be a popular introduction to ornithology, than a work of scientific pretension, we have not thought it necessary to give minute details of the form and colouring of this lively little bird, so familiar to all; nor is it needful that we

* See Griffith's Cuvier.

should say much to recommend it to the favour of our readers, for it comes to us with the primroses and violets, and is one of the many pleasant harbingers of the season of sunshine and flowers.

THE BLACK-AND-WHITE WATER-WAGTAIL.

The children's shouts of glee
  Were heard on the daisied green,
When the ebony and ivory
  Of thy glossy plumes were seen.

Like thine their joyous bound,
  And the bright, quick glancing eye,
And bird-like voices, of silver sound,
  Were hailing thee merrily.

Still, gently as breeze-borne flowers,
  Thou art flitting across the lawn;
But the playmates of former hours,
  Where are they with their light steps gone?

Thou art here, the same gay creature,
  But they, on the wide world thrown,
Are changed in form and feature,
  And with voices of deeper tone.

Still thy visits their bright looks bring,
  And our prayers ascend the while,
That the Guide of thy feeble wing,
  On the children's path may smile.

L.

ORDER PASSERES.

The Common Chimney-Swallow.

Hirundo Rustica.

Of the swallow and its habits so much has been said and written, that it seems scarcely necessary to do more than mention its name, to bring before our readers the remembrance of its peculiarities. Its social habits in building within the walls of our chimnies, its summer sojourn in our island, the autumnal congregating of its tribes, holding council on the approaching voyage, and the distant journies over pathless wastes and wide-extended waters, that follow, all these particulars are well known. It is no longer a matter of debate whether they emigrate from this country ;

"Or if, as colder breezes blow,
Prophetic of the waning year,
They hide, tho' none know where or how,
In the cliff's excavated brow,
And linger torpid there.

Or if, by instinct taught to know
Approaching dearth of insect food,
To isles and willowy aits thy go,
And bending on the pliant bough,
Sink in the dimpling flood."*

* Charlotte Smith.

So difficult, however, has it proved to ascertain the fact of their emigration, that even the acute and observant White, who is so rarely mistaken in a point of this sort, was led, by various circumstances which fell under his own notice, to favour the opinions alluded to in the preceding stanzas, which we have quoted from the pages of a writer cotemporary with the naturalist of Selborne. The investigations of succeeding naturalists have put the matter beyond a doubt; and it is now universally admitted, that, though some individuals may remain in this country, the great body of swallows migrate. As the flight takes place in the night, when the prevailing darkness protects them from many dangers to which they would be exposed by day, we can only watch the preparatory movements. These are truly curious and interesting; and from no spot, with which we are acquainted, can they be seen to greater advantage than in that pleasant woodland village of Selborne, where the amiable historian of his native valley was wont to observe their movements, watching their departure and return with the enquiring eye of the philosopher, and the enthusiasm of the poet. But in all places it is delightful to go forth while the woods are still arrayed in the varied livery of autumn, leaves of all hues, and watch

the assembling of these wonderful birds, flitting over our heads in airy circles and countless numbers. The migration of the swallow seems to have been noticed in almost all ages and countries. It is alluded to by the prophet Jeremiah: "the turtle and the crane and the swallow, observe the time of their coming." The poets of Greece and Rome have celebrated the arrival of this social bird in melodious strains, blending with its natural history many an imaginary circumstance and fanciful legend. The purity of its appearance, its graceful and rapid flight, its continuing long on the wing, and never resting on earth, has invested it with a character which speaks to the reflecting mind of a purer world; and renders it a fit emblem of the life of a Christian not chained to earth, though seeking on its surface the daily supply of daily wants.

We have spoken of its departure, which foretells approaching glooms and stormy skies; but the time of its re-appearance is a season of joy and rejoicing. When the trees are unfolding their leaves, and the endless profusion of wild-flowers begins again to gladden our eyes in the woods and fields, then do we look out for the swallow; especially from about the eighth or tenth of April, to the fourteenth or sixteenth, we are making enquiry after the expected visitant. If we

see her not ourselves, we are at least anxious to learn if others have been more fortunate; and when at length she flies before us, we hail her as the sure herald of brighter days, and forget for a moment the sage adage, so often dealt out to us by the wise and prudent, that "one swallow does not make a summer." It is a sober truth which we may not deny, yet doth the first swallow, come she early or late, bring fair summer promises, which we hope ever to welcome with delight. The physician carries the intelligence of her arrival to the chamber of the invalid, as the cheering presage of a more genial season; the aged man rests on his staff, and watches with pleasure the swift flight of the new-comer, as she sweeps over the valley; the little child tells the news to his mates of the nursery and the school-room, and they rejoice in the pleasant tidings.

"The welcome guest of settled spring,
The swallow too is come at last!
Just at sunset, when thrushes sing,
I saw her dash with rapid wing,
And hail'd her as she past."*

---

* Charlotte Smith.

FERN OWL.

THE SWALLOW.

What joy, welcome herald, thou bringest
To our homes o'er the sun-bright sea!
What glad lays of summer thou singest,
When she visits our shores with thee.

But she flies, and the warm spell is broken
That bound thy swift wing so long:
Sweet bird, to our hearts thou hast spoken,
In the notes of that farewell song.

Still thy soft hymns of praise art thou pouring;
Still on heaven's gentle airs dost thou fly;
So above should our spirits be soaring,
To bask in a brighter sky.

Oh! the path of the worldling is chilling,
He knows but the winter of time;
While the soul of the Christian is thrilling,
In the light of a purer clime.

ORDER PASSERES.

Goat-sucker. Fern-Owl. Night-Jar. Churn-Owl.

Caprimulgus Europæus.

Of this curious and interesting race of birds, Cuvier observes that they have the same light and soft plumage, shaded with grey and brown,

as the nocturnal birds. In fact, they may be said to be half night-birds, or rather twilight-birds, flying abroad only in the twilight, or in fine nights. They have an enormous mouth, still more deeply cleft than the swallow: this is furnished with strong mustachios, called by naturalists, *vibrissæ*, and is capable of receiving the largest insects; such as chaffers, night-beetles, and moths. When once within his extended beak, this bird is said to have no occasion to close it to secure his prey from escape; nature has furnished him with a gluey secretion, which falling on the insects, effectually detains them. The fern-owl, of which we have given the figure, is the only species found in Europe. It has received several popular names beside those mentioned above, such as square-tailed swallow, night-raven, night-hawk, dor-hawk, puckeridge, &c.

White, of Selborne, seems to have been the first English naturalist who paid much attention to the habits of this bird. To him it was a source of great amusement, as he watched it darting about on rapid wing in the summer twilight, or listened to its jarring note, which he compared to the clattering of castanets.* He

* "The Fern-Owl," says this naturalist, "from the dusk till day-break, serenades his mate with the clattering of castanets."

mentions it, among other sources of interest, in the Naturalist's Summer Evening Walk, in an elegantly written little poem, bearing that title.

"While deepening shades obscure the face of day,
To yonder bench, leaf-sheltered, let us stray,
To hear the drowsy dor come brushing by
With buzzing wing, or the shrill cricket cry;
To see the feeding bat glance through the wood,
To catch the distant falling of the flood;
While o'er the cliff th' awakened churn-owl hung,
Through the still gloom portracts his chattering song."

This bird passes only a small part of the year with us; it is found in every part of the old continent, from Siberia to Greece, Africa, and India. It arrives in England about the end of May, and quits it again about the middle of August. During this period, it may be seen wheeling about in mild still evenings, when its peculiar note may be heard to a considerable distance. This bird is solitary in its habits, two being rarely seen together. It frequents wood-covered hills, heathy plains, and especially spots where the fern plant abounds. It is said to make no nest, but merely to deposit its eggs in a hole at the foot of a tree or rock, or even on the plain ground: two or three eggs is the usual number. They are rather larger than those of a blackbird, oblong, shaded and marbled with brown on a white ground: the female is said to hatch the

eggs with the greatest solicitude. If she has reason to think they have been observed, she has been known to change their situation, pushing them forward very dexterously with her wing till she has conveyed them to a safe spot, and sometimes even carrying them there in her bill. Its manner of perching is peculiar, placing itself longitudinally on the branch, which it seems to tread in the manner of the domestic cock. When in this situation, it is very difficult to discern it, the colours of its plumage so nearly resembling the bark of a tree, that it cannot be detected without the closest scrutiny. It is when thus placed, that it utters its peculiar cry, which is a sort of croak; the sound it makes in flying is quite different, but not less peculiar. This is the humming, whirring noise, which some have compared to a spinning-wheel, and which White has described as resembling the ringing of castanets: it is in its rapid, airy, excursive flight after its prey, which it takes on the wing, that this sound is produced. Some have supposed it to be occasioned by the vast volume of air it engulphs in its capacious throat, as it flies about with its mouth open, while others consider it merely a variety in its note. The accurate White was of that opinion, as will be seen in the following extracts from his correspondence with

Mr. Markwich, which will serve to bring both the naturalist and the bird before you in an interesting point of view.

"There is no bird, I believe, whose manners I have studied more than that of the caprimulgus, as it is a wonderful and curious creature. I have always found, that though sometimes it may chatter as it flies, as I know it does, yet in general it utters its jarring note sitting on a bough. I have for many a half-hour watched it as it sat, with its under mandible quivering, and particularly this summer. It perches usually on a bare twig, with its head lower than its tail. This bird is most punctual in beginning its song exactly at the close of day: so exactly, that I have known it strike up, more than once or twice, just at the report of the Portsmouth evening gun, which we can hear when the weather is still. It appears to me past all doubt, that its notes are formed by organic impulse—by the powers of the parts of its wind-pipe, formed for sound, just as cats purr. You will credit me, I hope, when I assure you, that as my neighbours were assembled in an hermitage by the side of a steep hill, where we drink tea, one of the churn-owls came and settled on the cross of that little straw edifice, and began to clatter, and continued his notes for many minutes. We were all struck

with wonder, to find that the organs of that little animal when put in motion, gave a sensible vibration to the whole building. This bird also sometimes makes a small squeak, repeated four or five times." In another letter, written also from his pleasant Selborne, he says: "On the 12th of July, I had a fair opportunity of contemplating the motions of the fern-owl, as it was playing round a large oak that swarmed with fern-chaffers. The powers of its wing were wonderful, exceeding, if possible, the various evolutions and quick turns of the swallow genus. But the circumstance that pleased me most was, that I saw it distinctly, more than once, put out its short leg while on the wing, and, by a bend of the head, deliver something into its mouth. If it takes any part of its prey with its foot, as I have now the greatest reason to suppose it does these chaffers, I no longer wonder at the use of its middle toe, which is curiously furnished with a serrated claw."

This last opinion of White's has been much controverted: some have supposed that the movement of the foot towards the mouth of the bird, was merely to enable it to comb out the hairs of its mustachio, when ruffled by catching its prey. A very probable solution of this difficulty may be found in the following suggestion

of a writer in the Magazine of Natural History; viz. that the singular claw of the fern-owl is formed for the purpose of detaching the short hooked claws of the beetles or chaffers, which are occasionally fixed to the side of the mouth, and must impede the birds swallowing them.

White seems to have been, as we before observed, the first English naturalist who accurately noted the peculiarities of this bird. In the green recesses of his own beloved village, he lingered, in many a calm summer evening, to watch the flight of the fern-owl, chasing its insect prey amid the trees, and producing the singular sound which he compares to the clattering of castanets. To those who, dwelling in the neighbourhood of Selborne, have been reared from childhood in enthusiastic admiration for that picturesque village, and an almost affectionate interest for every thing connected with the memory of the naturalist, the sight and sound of this bird will ever recall Selborne to their recollection with vivid feelings of delight. Were we to meet with it at the farthest ends of the earth, we should in a moment be transported to Selborne, and live over again some of the sunniest days of our lives, when, in the society of those dearest to us, we made our summer pilgrimages to the village, and paid our devoirs at the shrine of the amiable

and unaspiring naturalist, pausing at every spot which more especially recalled him to our remembrance. His name, as a naturalist, has gone abroad to the world, and gathered fame he never sought. Perhaps, could he have foreseen the future, this fame would have been less grateful to his gentle and benevolent spirit, than the knowledge that he would leave a memorial in the hearts of his neighbours, which should descend through successive generations, and the children's children of those whom he knew, should look on their excursions to the scene of his scientific labours, as bright eras in their days of enjoyment. That the man who wins golden opinions abroad, is without honour in his own country, is too often true; but we know of at least one happy exception to the rule in White, the naturalist of Selborne.

THE FERN-OWL.

Hark! hark! within the beechen shade,
  The clattering castanets I hear;
'Tis the fern-owl's serenade,
  In his circuit hovering near.
That whirring sound is dear to me
As strains of gentler melody.

I've heard it when, in by-gone hours,
With friends beloved I wandered far,
Or rested in sweet woodbine bowers,
Till evening sent her silver star.
And then we hailed the gem of night,
And walked with joy beneath its light.

How often have we silent stood,
To listen, chattering bird, to thee;
And lingering, paused beside the wood,
To catch thy rugged symphony;
And thought that in that tranquil shade,
The fern-owl pleasant music made.

With nature's genial love inspired,
Wandering within his green domains,
Thee, Selborne's tuneful sage admired,
And praised thy rude and jarring strains.
And loved at summer's closing day,
To watch thee in the twilight grey.

Within those verdant precincts still,
When summer nights are soft and balm,
Thy note on Selborne's wood-crowned hill,
Is heard in twilight's hour of calm:
But Selborne's sage no more is seen,
Pacing amid the alleys green.

Yet lives he in his pleasant page,
And every fossil, bird and flower,
Around the ruined hermitage,
Or in his own deserted bower,
Becomes a relic rich and rare,
Because it stands recorded there.

He sought, with unambitious aim,
Lone Nature's secret steps to trace;
Nor knew the charm his honoured name
Would cast around his native place;
Till distant travellers thither bound,
Deem that they tread on classic ground.

ORDER PASSERES.

The Whip-poor-Will.

Caprimulgus Vociferus.

We follow the account of our own caprimulgus, with a sketch of the habits of another singular bird of the same tribe, found in North and South America. For this purpose, we shall have recourse to the volumes of Wilson, the American ornithologist, who thus records the result of his own personal observation of the peculiarity of the Caprimulgus Vociferus :—

"This is a singular and very celebrated species, universally noted over the greater part of the United States, for the loud reiterations of his favourite call in spring; and yet, personally, he is but little known, most people being unable to distinguish this from the other species; and some insisting that they are the same.

On or about the twenty-fifth of April, if the season be not uncommonly cold, the whip-poor-will is first heard in Pennsylvania, in the evening, as the dusk of twilight commences, or in the morning, as soon as dawn has broken. The

notes of this solitary bird, from the ideas which are naturally associated with them, seem like the voice of an old friend, and are listened to by almost all with great interest. At first they issue from some retired part of the woods, the glen, or mountain; in a few evenings, perhaps, we hear them from the adjoining coppice, the garden-fence, the road before the door, and even from the roof of the dwelling-house, long after the family have retired to rest. Some of the more ignorant and superstitious, consider this near approach as foreboding to the family nothing less than misfortune, sickness, or death to some of its members; these visits, however, occur so often without any bad consequences, that this superstitious dread seems rather on the decline.

He is now a regular acquaintance. Every morning and evening his shrill and rapid repetitions are heard from the adjoining woods; and when two or more are calling out at the same time, as is often the case in the pairing season, and at no great distance from each other, the noise, mingling with the echoes from the mountains, is really surprising. Strangers, in parts of the country where these birds are numerous, find it almost impossible for some time to sleep;

while to those long acquainted with them, the sound often serves as a lullaby to assist repose. These notes seem pretty plainly to articulate the words which have been generally applied to them, whip-poor-will, the first and last syllable being uttered with great emphasis, and the whole in about a second to each repetition; but when two or more males meet, their whip-poor-will altercations become much more rapid and incessant, as if each were straining to overpower or silence the other. When near, you often hear an introductory cluck between the notes. At these times, as well as at almost all others, they fly low, not more than a few feet from the surface, skimming about the house, and before the door, alighting on the wood-piles, or settling on the roof. Towards midnight, they generally become silent, unless in clear moonlight, when they are heard with little intermission till morning. During the day, they sit in the most retired, solitary, and deep-shaded parts of the woods, generally on high ground, where they repose in silence. When disturbed, they rise within a few feet, sail low and slowly through the woods, for thirty or forty yards, and generally settle on a low branch, or on the ground. Their sight appears deficient during the day,

as, like owls, they seem then to want that vivacity for which they are distinguished in the morning and evening twilight.

The whip-poor-will is nine inches and a half long, and nineteen inches in extent. The bill is blackish, a full quarter of an inch long, much stronger than that of the night-hawk, and bent a little at the point. The under mandible arched a little upwards, following the curvation of the upper. The nostrils are prominent and tubular, their openings directed forwards. The mouth is extravagantly large, of a pale flesh-colour within, and beset along the sides with a number of long, thick, elastic bristles, the longest of which extends more than half an inch beyond the point of the bill, and curves inwards. These seem to serve as feelers, to prevent the escape of their prey. The eyes are very large, full, and bluish-black. The plumage is variegated with black, pale cream-brown, and rust colour, sprinkled in such minute streaks and spots, as to defy description. The back is dark, and finely streaked with black."

We cannot close our account of the whip-poor-will, without giving an amusing extract from the pages of Waterton, which will introduce to your notice some other species of this singular and interesting race of birds. " When the sun

has sunk in the western woods," says Waterton, "when you can only see a straggler or two of the feathered tribe, hastening to join his mate, already at its roosting-place; then it is that the goat-sucker comes out of the forest, where it has sat all day long in slumbering ease, unmindful of the gay and busy scenes around it. Its eyes are too delicately formed to bear the light, and thus it is forced to shun the flaming face of day, and wait in patience, till night invites him to partake of the pleasures her dusky presence brings. The harmless, unoffending goat-sucker, from the time of Aristotle to the present day, has been in disgrace with man. Father has handed down to son, and author to author, that this nocturnal thief subsists by milking the flocks. Poor, injured little bird of night, how sadly hast thou suffered, and how foul a stain has inattention to facts put upon thy character! Thou hast never robbed any man of any part of his property, nor deprived the kid of a drop of milk. When the moon shines bright, you may have a fair opportunity of examining the goat-sucker. You will see it close by the cows, goats, and sheep. Approach a little nearer—he is not shy:

"He fears no danger, for he knows no sin."

See how the nocturnal flies are tormenting the herd, and with what dexterity he springs up and catches them, as fast as they alight on the animals. Observe how quiet they stand, and how sensible they seem of his good offices, for they neither strike at him, nor tread on him, nor try to drive him away as an uncivil intruder. Were you to dissect him, and inspect his stomach, you would find no milk there. It is full of the flies which have been annoying the herd. The prettily mottled plumage of the goat-sucker, like the owl, wants the lustre which is observed in the feathers of the birds of day. This at once marks him as a lover of the pale moon's nightly beams. There are nine species here, (in the woods of South America.) The largest appears nearly the size of the English wood-owl. Its cry is so remarkable, that having once heard it, you will never forget it. When night reigns over these immeasurable wilds, whilst lying in your hammock, you will hear the goat-sucker lamenting like one in deep distress. A stranger would never conceive it to be the cry of a bird. He would say it was the departing voice of a midnight murdered victim, or the last wailing of Niobe for her poor children. Suppose yourself in hopeless sorrow; begin with a high loud note, and pronounce "ha, ha, ha,

ha, ha, ha, ha," each note lower and lower, till the last is scarcely heard, pausing a moment or two betwixt every note; and you will have some idea of the moaning of the largest goat-sucker in Demerara. Four other species articulate some words so distinctly, that they have received their names from the sentences they utter; and absolutely bewilder the stranger on his arrival in these parts. The most common one sits close by your door, and flies, and alights three or four yards before you, as you walk along the road, crying "who-are-you? who-who-who-are-you?" Another bids you "work-away, work-work-work-away." A third cries mournfully, "willy-come-go, willy-willy-willy-come-go." And high up in the country a fourth, tells you to "whip-poor-will, whip-whip-whip-poor-will." You will never persuade the negro to destroy these birds, or get the Indian to let fly his arrow at them; they are considered birds of omen and reverential dread. Jumbo, the demon of Africa, has them under his command, and they are equally supposed to obey the Yabahou, or Demerara Indian devil. They are the receptacles of departed souls, who come back to earth again, unable to rest for crimes done in their days of nature; or they are expressly sent by Jumbo or Yabahou, to haunt cruel and hard-hearted

masters, and retaliate injuries received from them. If the largest goat-sucker chances to cry near the white man's door, sorrow and grief will soon be inside; and they expect to see the master waste away with a slow consuming sickness. If he be heard close to the Indian's or negro's hut, from that night misfortune sits brooding over it, and they await the event in terrible suspense. You will forgive the poor Indian of Guiana, for this: he knows no better, he has no one to teach him."*

THE WHIP-POOR-WILL.

In the wide-spreading woods of the distant west,
When the song-birds of day are gone to their rest,
A wild mournful sound at nightfall is heard,
The wailing cry of a night-flying bird.
And whip-poor-will, whip-whip-whip-poor-will,
Is the cry of the wandering night-bird still.

The traveller starts when he hears the sound,
And pauses, and listens, and looks around;
He deems it the voice of some mourning child,
Who has gone astray in the lonely wild.
And whip-poor-will, whip-whip-whip-poor-will,
Is the cry of the wandering night-bird still.

Sometimes to the skirts of the forest he comes,
Flies through our gardens, and visits our homes,

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* See Waterton's Wanderings.

Sits on the roof-top, or rests on the trees,
And fills with strange accents the evening breeze.
And whip-poor-will, whip-whip-whip-poor-will,
Is the cry of the wandering night-bird still.

SONG OF THE WHO-ARE-YOU GOAT-SUCKER.

Who-are-you? who-who-who-are-you?
That come to rest by the cabin-door;
Are you a faithful friend and true?
I never have seen your face before.
How can I tell what honours are due,
Who-are-you? who-who-who-are-you?

Who-are-you? who-who-who-are-you?
Since my master's roof must shield your head;
Foes are many, and friends are few,
What claim have you to the pilgrim's bed?
How can I tell what honours are due?
Who-are-you? who-who-who-are you?

SONG OF THE WILLY-COME-GO GOAT-SUCKER.

Willy-willy-willy-come-go,
I can no longer linger here;
The evening breezes softly blow,
The tranquil hour of night is near.
Where the crystal waters flow,
Where the lofty pine-trees grow,
Willy-come-go, willy-willy-willy-come-go.

Oh! listen to my plaintive cry
And let us thro' the forest roam,
From the Indian's cabin fly,
And from the whiteman's prouder home:
Each may prove a bitter foe,
Safety here we cannot know,
Willy-come-go, willy-willy-willy-come-go.

SONG OF HE WORK-AWAY GOAT-SUCKER.

Work-away, work-work-work-away,
To the tawny Indian boy I say;
He places his hand on his ready bow,
And looks fiercely round for his hidden foe.
And swiftly the fatal arrow would fly,
But I catch the glance of his kindling eye.

He slackens the string of his bow again,
And feels he has pointed the shaft in vain;
That Indian boy will do me no wrong,
For he scorns to silence my idle song,
And calmly he smiles as he hears me say,
Work-away, work-work-work-away.

ORDER PASSERES.

The Skylark, or Lavrock.

Alauda Arvensis.—Linn.

Nature, varied in all her works, has no monotonous uniformity to weary us, whatever quarter of her kingdom we examine. How diversified are the forms, the habits, and the songs of our birds—how various the haunts in which we find them! We penetrate into the depths of the forest to detect the shy woodpecker, or listen to the plaintive notes of the ring-dove:—we loiter in the stately avenue to mark the busy stir of the congregated rooks:—we roam on ocean's shore to watch the wheeling flight, and hear the wild cry of the sea-bird:—and we linger in the bosky dingle, to listen to the strains of the enamoured nightingale:—we go to the mountain heights in search of the eagle and the ptarmigan; and we descend to the well-watered vallies to look on the radiant wing of the halcyon, gleaming like a sapphire on the surface of the tranquil waters. The plover, the sand-piper, and the booming bittern, lead us to the humid marsh. We roam

over the heathy waste, unredeemed by the toil of man, in search of the grouse and the moor-cock:—we rest within the cultured bound of the garden and shrubbery, to listen to the song of the goldfinch or the black-cap, or to watch the tiny willow-wren, gliding from flower to flower, lightly and noiselessly, as the airy creation of a dream. And now we invite you, not to the mountain or the forest, but to the open corn-fields, and the cultivated enclosure, to observe the skylark, pouring forth in mid air such sweet, earnest melody, as though he would expend his little life in the song, and you almost expect to see him descend powerless and lifeless to the earth: but his strength fails not; he mounts yet higher and higher still, and pours forth in his ascending flight, strains so full of harmony, that we are ready to imagine he hears and answers the music of an unseen world. He pursues his heaven-ward course, and his swelling notes reach us still, while we gaze from earth, till the little breeze-borne warbler becomes a dim speck in the distance. He has reached his highest point, but he cannot tarry there; his strain is heard again approaching earth, his song is still sweet, but it becomes less and less powerful as he descends, and when he reaches the ground it ceases altogether. He has no note

for earth—he has left his music in the skies: again and again does the lark spring from his lowly resting-place, and soar into the clouds, renewing every time all his wondrous harmony. His matin song is heard in the early morning hour, and again he has pleasant vespers for the calm decline of day. He is heard too in the morning of the year, and his song cheers us almost to its conclusion: he begins so early as the middle of January, and sings on till November.* If he emigrates, it must be for a very short period. Perhaps the fact may be that with this, as well as with some other birds, emigration is only partial, and many individuals remain in this country through the winter; it is probably from these residents that we hear the late and early songs, rather than from the emigrators. That some do emigrate, is proved by the circumstance of their having been met at sea, crossing the Mediterranean; repeated instances have occurred of their dropping on the decks of ships, exhausted by their flight. In their passage from this country, they are said first to pause and repose themselves in Malta, and other eastern islands of the Mediterranean. They afterwards

* For remarks on the notes of this and some other of our song birds, see additional notices at the end of the book.

pursue their course to Syria and Egypt, from whence, it is asserted, they spread into Nubia and Abyssinia. The lark has been called the chief musician of the fields, as the nightingale is of the woods. The matin song of the lark was the established signal for the reapers in ancient Greece to begin their labours.

"The lark," says Bewick, "is diffused almost universally throughout Europe; it is every where extremely prolific. It makes its nest on the ground between two clods of earth, and lines it with dried grass and roots. The female lays four or five eggs, of a greyish brown, marked with darker spots: she has generally two broods in the year, and sits only about fifteen days. As soon as the young have escaped from the nest, the attachment of the parent seems to increase; she flutters over their heads, directs all their motions, and is ever ready to screen them from danger."

THE SKYLARK.

Gay bird of the sky
Ascending on high,
And singing sweet songs in the morning hour,
While the dew still rests on the opening flower,
And thy wing is wet by the summer shower.

So sweet is thy lay
Heard far, far away,
While the swelling notes to the clouds aspire,
As though they were caught from an angel's lyre,
And echoed the strains of the heavenly choir.

I have watched thy descent
When weary and spent,
But not long on the earth didst thou lingering remain;
Thou wert soon on thy airy track again,
And filling the sky with thy joyous strain.

Tho' the fetters of clay
My flight would delay,
Tho' heavy griefs to my spirit may cling,
Like thee I would spread forth the feeble wing,
And songs of thanksgiving and gratitude sing.

When weary and worn
To earth I am borne,
Not long would my fluttering spirit delay,
But soaring again on my heaven-ward way,
I would hasten my flight to the portals of day.

And the choral hymn
Through the distance dim,
Should lure me along on my heavenly flight,
Ascending through glorious regions of light,
To gaze on the vision unspeakably bright.

ORDER PASSERES.

The Woodlark.

Alauda Lulu.—Cuvier. Alauda Arborea.—Linn.

While the skylarks delight in the open fields, and fear not that the winds of heaven will visit them too roughly, the woodlarks, on the contrary, seek the pleasant shelter of the wood-side, and pour forth their songs from beneath its shade; they often sing also on the wing like the skylark. It is not only during the bright hours of day that their strains resound; at set of sun, and even far into the night, in hot summer weather, they are heard singing in the air.

"What time the timorous hare limps forth to feed,
When the scared owl skims round the grassy mead;
Then high in air, and poised upon his wings,
Unseen the soft enamoured woodlark sings."

These birds are found in Siberia, Poland, Germany, Holland, Italy, parts of France and Spain, and in England. Early in the spring we hear them warbling together in great numbers; as the season advances, their songs become more full and sweet, and they pair, and separate,

and build their nests. Then it is that the woodlark, seated on a tree near his mate, pours forth his most delightful songs. As soon as the young ones come out of the shell, he engages busily with the mother-bird in providing for their wants. The nest is made on the ground, in furrows, covered with grass and brambles, and usually on the borders of a wood. But it is only in spring, summer, and autumn, that the woodlarks are to be found in these retreats. At the close of Autumn, they quit these summer haunts, and retire into the open stoney fields; here they assemble in flocks of from thirty to fifty in number, never mingling with any other species. Their summer songs are then no longer heard, and they utter only a plaintive sort of cry, resembling the syllables *lu-lu*, from whence they derive the name given them by the French naturalists.

THE WOODLARK.

Dost thou love to hear the song-birds of spring ?
  Are their notes as voices of joy to thee ?—
Then fly to the grove where the woodlarks sing,
  Rejoicing once more in their vernal glee.
The spring time is come, the winter is past,
  And the woodlarks' songs are cheerful once more :

JAVA SPARROW.

Their sorrows have fled with the wintry blast,
And soft-flowing lays through the woodlands they pour;
Forgetful how lately the winter wind blew,
And they sung the sad notes of their plaintive *lu-lu*.

With kindred and clan they mingle the strain,
And love by the birds of their race to abide;
And they come to their forest haunts again,
To build their low nests by the green hill side.
When the stormy winds unroof their retreat,
And wither the wreaths of their summer bowers,
Then afar in the valley the wanderers meet,
And seek to beguile the sad wintry hours.
While chilled by the night wind, and bathed by the dew,
They chaunt in soft concert their plaintive *lu-lu*.

ORDER PASSERES.

The Sparrow.

Fringilla domestica.—LINN.

THE most bold and mischievous of the feathered tribe in this country, is the sparrow. Invited or uninvited he heeds not, but freely takes his station in our fields, our gardens, our yards, and under the eaves of our houses. Sometimes he even dislodges the martin from his clay cottage, built with so much labour, coolly taking up his abode in the usurped tenement, and rearing there his young, as if it had descended to him by hereditary right, and been

the home of his fathers, and the cradle of his infancy. In the winter, when we scatter crumbs for robins and other woodland favourites, whose usual resources have failed them in their hour of need, the sparrows come unbidden to the banquet, and too often possess themselves of the greater portion of the feast spread for others. At all seasons they are ever at hand. In the fields they devour the grain; in the gardens and orchards they attack the fruit; in the farm-yard they rob the wheat-rick, and share the provisions of the poultry. At the same time, there is in their air and carriage an appearance of audacity, which is sometimes almost provoking, and at other times exceedingly amusing. To give them their due portion of praise, they certainly do benefit us by destroying an immense number of caterpillars; but on the other hand they devour grain in such enormous quantities, as seems far more than an equivalent for the service they do us in the destruction of insects. A French writer on rural economy, has calculated that the grain consumed by sparrows in France annually, is worth ten millions of franks. We cannot therefore wonder that farmers and gardeners wage perpetual warfare with these pilferers. Indeed, there are few persons who are disposed to grant them protection, for while they render themselves ob-

noxious by their depredations, they have no sweet voice of song to plead in their behalf, as many of the fringilla tribe have, especially the goldfinch. The sparrow has only a short chirping note, which is not sufficiently musical to recommend him to our notice. Yet he is not without some beauty of plumage, when his colours are not dimmed by the smoke and dirt of the city, where he seems as happily and as easily to make his home, as in the country; he has, too, something better than mere appearance to claim our attention. Notwithstanding all the evil we have said of him, he is quite a model of parental tenderness, as the following interesting anecdote will prove. We shall relate the story in the words of Mr. Smellic, under whose observation the circumstances it details occurred.

"When I was a boy," says that gentleman, "I carried off a nest of young sparrows, about a mile from my place of residence. After the nest was completely moved, and while I was marching home with them in triumph, I perceived, with some degree of astonishment, both the parents following me at some distance, and observing all my motions in perfect silence. A thought then struck me that they might follow me home, and feed the young according to their usual manner. When just entering the door

I held up the nest, and made the young ones utter the cry which is expressive of the desire of food. I immediately put the nest and the young in the corner of a wire cage, and placed it on the outside of a window. I chose a situation in a room, where I could perceive all that should happen, without being myself seen. The young animals soon cried for food. In a short time both parents, having their bills filled with small caterpillars, came to the cage, and after chatting a little, as we should do with a friend, through the lattice of a prison, gave a small worm to each. This parental intercourse continued regularly for some time, till the young ones were completely fledged, and had acquired a considerable degree of strength. I then took one of the strongest of them and placed him on the outside of the cage, in order to observe the conduct of the parents, after one of their offspring was emancipated. In a few minutes both parents arrived as usual, loaded with food. They no sooner perceived that one of their children had escaped from prison, than they fluttered about, and made a thousand noisy demonstrations of joy, both with their wings and voices. These tumultuous expressions of unexpected happiness, at last gave place to a more calm and soothing conversation. By their voices and

their movements, it was evident that they earnestly entreated him to follow and to fly from his present dangerous state. He seemed to be impatient to obey their mandates; but by his gestures and feeble sounds, he plainly expressed that he was afraid to try an exertion he had never before attempted. They, however, incessantly repeated their solicitations: by flying, alternately, from the cage to a neighbouring chimney-top, they endeavoured to show how easily the journey was to be accomplished. He at last committed himself to the air, and alighted in safety. On his arrival, another scene of clamorous and active joy was exhibited. Next day, I repeated the experiment, by exposing another of the young ones on the top of the cage. I observed the same conduct with the remainder of the brood, which consisted of four. I need hardly add, that not one, either of the parents or children, ever again revisited the execrated cage."

Sparrows are found in almost every variety of climate, but only in cultivated countries. Deserts and wildernesses they ever avoid. They are found throughout Greece, and in Northern Africa, in China and the East Indies, and also as far north as Siberia. On the western coast of Africa they are never seen; not because of

the heat, since they can support that of Egypt, but because of the absence of that kind of food which they require. It is only where corn and other similar plants are cultivated that they are seen.

It is a singular thing, that neither sparrows nor pies are seen further north than the banks of the Pelledoui, a river of Siberia, which is the most remote tract in that quarter, in which corn is cultivated. It is also asserted, that they were never seen on that spot, until a few years since, when the grain in question was first sown there. How surprising is the instinct which leads these little wanderers to the precise place where their food is to be found, and to no other! It does indeed forcibly remind us of the providential care of the great Author of nature, of whom the psalmist says, "these all wait upon thee that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather." Nor less, of the beautiful and touching reference to the security of their daily provision, by which our blessed Saviour taught his followers to dismiss all useless and desponding anxiety for the future. "Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them." The sparrows in par-

ticular, worthless as we esteem them, and of little value as they were then considered, are especially pointed out in another place as not beneath the protecting care of Him who hath formed them.

The sparrow has been, by some naturalists, supposed to be a short liver: while others say his existence is prolonged to the period of eighteen or twenty years. This, however, is a point by no means clearly ascertained; but if they live thus long, as well as multiply with rapidity, it is no wonder we are surrounded by such countless multitudes.

TO THE SPARROW.

They say thou'rt a bold and a thievish bird,
And thy mischievous ways I have known full well;
But none are so wholly bad, I have heard,
But there's some good thing we may find to tell.
And so, saucy sparrow, I'll try and see,
If any good thing may be told of thee.

Yes, I see thee there, with thy short, thick beak,
And the saucy glance of thy roguish eye;
'Tis as tho' my favour thou wouldst bespeak,
Or ask, in thy pertness, the reason why
I never have search'd thy hist'ry, to see
How many good things may be told of thee.

at the window where he hung, and played a sweet Italian air; in an instant the bird roused himself, and appeared to feel all his energies awakened: he assumed an attitude of attention so marked as to attract the notice of his mistress, and evidently listened eagerly as if his ear drank in the sounds with delight. The music ceased, and with it the animation of the little captive, who relapsed into his usual contemplative mood; leaving his mistress to question, in vain, what dream of the past the strain of the wandering minstrel had recalled; whether it carried him to the spicy groves of his native land, and the songs of birds he was wont to hear there; or, what is perhaps more probable, whether it might not bring back the remembrance of some favourite air of a former owner, often played in his presence.

We must not fail to mention another particular of the pretty Javanese. When he first came to his present home, he had a fair companion who shared his cage with him: the lady-sparrow in a few weeks sickened and died; her mate soon after moulted, when the white spots on the side of his head became black, and remained so till the next moulting season: he then laid aside his mourning garb, and resumed his former appearance.

SONG OF THE JAVA SPARROW.

In the Library at D—— Cottage.

You ask me, lady, why the hours
  Fleet gaily in this home of mine—
This sunny home, where fragrant flowers
  Above their marble base entwine;—

If sage's lore or poet's lay
  Have power to charm my listening ear;
Or tales of countries far away,
  Or attic wit that sparkles here?

Nor lore, nor lay, nor wit I prize;
  Nor tale, nor converse sweet, beguile
My ev'ning hours, though gazing eyes
  Admire my graceful form the while.

'Tis cordial kindness, fond and true,
  Still makes my life one summer day,
And brightens ev'ry joy for you,
  That glows in friendship's genial ray.

Oh! take your lyre, and while my song
  In dulcet notes is warbled low,
Your strains of gratitude prolong
  For blessings I can never know.

Free as the birds that float in air,
  Your course no narrow precincts bounds;
Go, soften woe and lighten care,
  And spread the balm of kindness round.

L.

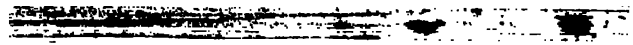
ORDER PASSERES.

The Goldfinch.

Fringilla carduelis.

This is one of the most elegant of our English birds; graceful in form, and arrayed in much more brilliant colours than the birds of this climate usually exhibit. It has also a sweet and cheerful song, which is heard from the earliest days of spring; but it is in the month of May that it gives us its sweetest and fullest strains: perched on a tree it will pour forth its notes from early morning till set of sun, and make the orchard resound with its music. It continues to sing till the month of August, except during the period at which it is rearing its young; then all its time and attention are devoted to parental duties. The male bird, though very attentive to his pretty mate, does not assist her in building the nest; but he is constantly watching over her, either close by her side, or perched on the nearest tree; and this he does, both when she is seeking her food, and while engaged in preparing the abode

GOLDFINCH.



for her future progeny. The nest is composed of roots, fine moss, the down of plants, and lichens, and it is lined with horse-hair, wool, and downy feathers. Here the hen bird deposits five or six white eggs, spotted with brown towards the thick end. While she is hatching, her companion never leaves her except to procure food; but sits on a neighbouring tree and cheers her with his song. If disturbed, he flies away; but it is only as a feint to prevent the nest from being discovered, and he soon returns. On her part, she devotes herself with the utmost patience and constancy to her maternal cares. As the time approaches when the young ones will make their appearance, she is evidently increasingly interested in their preservation, and will brave every thing to defend them from injury: the stormiest gales of wind, the drenching rain, or the pelting hail-storm, do not drive her from her nest; there she remains, and her faithful mate continues in attendance on her. At last, the little birds pierce the shell, and faint cries proclaim their wants to their parents; then there is full employment to procure food sufficient to supply five or six craving little creatures. The tender seeds of groundsel, lettuce, and other plants, are its favourite food; but especially

the thistle-seed; from its fondness for this plant it is sometimes called thistle-finch in England, and *chardonneret* in France.

The young goldfinches cannot provide their own food wholly, even when they have quitted the nest: it is therefore long before they cease to require the attendance of the parent birds, and yet they contrive to raise three broods in a year. The goldfinch is easily reconciled to loss of freedom, and may be taught a variety of tricks, and rendered very familiar with its attendant. It is said to be so fond of the society of its own species, that even the resemblance of another goldfinch is sufficient to console it in captivity. If a glass is placed near the cage, it is evidently pleased to look at its own image reflected in it, and is often seen to take its hemp-seed, grain by grain, and go and eat before the mirror, thinking, no doubt, that it is feeding in company. Poor little bird! how much more delightful to see it flying gaily among its feathered mates of the field and the orchard, than thus cheated with the semblance of society. Among the black-caps the male, as we have noticed, selects the spot for the summer residence; with the gold-finches, on the contrary, it should appear that this is the business of the lady, though the gentleman decides the point at last by his casting

vote, which, it must be admitted, is perfectly proper and correct.

Early in the spring of 1827, it happened that a bird had been lost from a cage, at the residence of a gentleman in Exmouth. The cage was still left hanging up, with its door open, in the passage entrance to a back court, and the seed left by the late inhabitant still remained in the trough. One morning, it seems that a female goldfinch, looking out for a nestling place, saw and admired the little wire-bound mansion hanging between earth and sky: she entered it and fed freely on the seeds: the door was closed on her; but as it was perceived she was a hen bird, she was afterwards liberated. She then flew away, and the owner of the cage had no idea of ever seeing her again: in about two hours, however, she returned, again entered the cage, and fed as freely as before, was again shut in, and again liberated. These visits she repeated daily for a considerable time; she was then missing for several days, and her entertainers began to think she had taken her final leave of the cage. At length she once more made her appearance, accompanied by a male bird; she entered as usual, fed on the seeds, and seemed to invite her companion to enter also; but he was of a less confiding nature, and warily declined the invitation.

Perched on the outside of the cage, he inspected it through the grating, and the examination evidently confirmed him in his suspicions, as he finally flew off to a neighbouring tree, and waited there till his lady companion chose to rejoin him; they then disappeared together, and were thought of no more. Nearly two months had passed away when the hen goldfinch again made her appearance. During that lapse of time she had been busily employed, had built her nest, laid her eggs, and hatched and reared her young. These particulars of her history were fairly surmised from the present state of her affairs: now she came, not attended by a male bird, but by four young birds, evidently her own brood. She entered the cage as before, and fed on the seeds, inviting her companions, by her example, to do the same; but they had inherited the wary temper of their sire, and prudently kept on the safe side of the airy pavilion. The mother bird continued to feed awhile on the seeds; but finding she could not induce her young ones to share her chosen mansion with her, she eventually abandoned it, and took her flight to return no more: doubtless she cast

"Many a longing, lingering look behind."

Whether so blithe a creature could breathe a sigh of regret as she relinquished her fondly-

cherished wish, we do not undertake to determine.

The song of the goldfinch has been fancifully supposed to resemble the words, "*Take* me with you *if* you please," chaunted in recitative, with a strong emphasis on the first and fifth words in the sentence.

THE SONG OF THE GOLDFINCH.

Take me with you *if* you please,
I'm a merry little bird;
I love the orchard's sheltering trees,
And there my cheerful note is heard.
Softly blows the summer breeze;
Take me with you *if* you please.

I love the woods and meadows too,
Where other small birds gaily sing;
I sip with them the morning dew,
And with them prune my glossy wing.
Softly blows the summer breeze;
Take me with you *if* you please.

ORDER PASSERES.

The Bullfinch.

Loxia pyrrhula.—Linn.

This little bird, whose figure and colouring is too well known to require description, is one of the brightest plumaged natives of our woods. A fine bullfinch, in full feather, is really a very handsome little creature; and in addition to his attractive appearance, he has a teachable nature, which makes him but too desirable a prize for the bird-catcher. His native note is very simple; but he may be taught to whistle a variety of tunes. Bewick says, that these birds are frequently imported into this country from Germany, where they are taught to articulate several words with great distinctness.

The bullfinch, like the robin, only migrates in winter from his summer haunts in wood and thicket, to approach nearer to the habitations of man, and feed on the seeds and berries he finds on cultivated ground. In the spring he may be seen busily pecking at the buds of our fruit-trees; and multitudes are destroyed by the gardener,

who deems them his inveterate enemies. On the other hand, naturalists assert that they assail no buds, save those in which the destructive worm is embedded; and that far from destroying the embryo plum or cherry, they protect our gardens and orchards from much more destructive enemies of the insect race.

This bird sometimes changes its plumage, and becomes wholly black when in confinement. This has been observed to be especially the case when it is fed with hempseed. We well recollect an instance in which such a change occurred, apparently from another cause. A pair of bullfinches had long lived together in captivity, and appeared to have become quite reconciled to their loss of freedom, and to sojourn happily in their little wire-bound dwelling. At length the female bullfinch sickened and died. Her mate seemed to feel her loss deeply. From that time his plumage lost its brightness, and he was soon most appropriately clothed in a mourning suit, which he retained till his death, about two years after. Perhaps the unhappiness occasioned by the death of his companion affected his health, and by this means the change of colour was produced.

We have yet another bullfinch to introduce to your notice, who exhibited a degree of intelli-

gence so extraordinary as, at times, almost to appear the result of reason, rather than of instinct. A few years since, we were accustomed to see the cage of a tame bullfinch hanging in the midst of wreathing clematis and roses, which clustered over the windows of an elegant cottage-ornée in the west of England. It was a pleasant home; and could the bird have enjoyed, as we did, the verdant lawn, the thick shrubbery, and the pretty root-house, with its stained window, looking out on the beautiful ravine, rich in rock and wood, it would have been a paradise to him. He was one of the many pets of the gay young creatures who dwelt beneath the roof of that tasteful residence, and probably was happy as a captive bird could be. His history was this: "Caught and caged," we know not when nor where, about ten years ago he came accidentally into the possession of an elderly lady in Lancashire. He did not, at that time, appear to be a young bird: he was very tame, and had been taught to pipe a tune. Age and infirmity forbade his venerable mistress to wander abroad in fields and woods. Perhaps her ear had grown dull to the voice of singing men and singing women; but the song of the bird was pleasant music, and recalled the calm and simple pleasures which, in earlier years, had been her portion

amid the scenes of nature. Perhaps, too, the gentle trilling of her little captive, pouring out his songs of praise to his mistress, fell on her heart as in sweet accordance with her own aspirations of grateful thanksgiving for all the mercies of her lengthened way. With this lady he lived four peaceful years. The period passed under her roof was chiefly characterised by that quietude and tranquil repose which is so well suited to declining years, and exhibited little variety from day to day. His aged mistress and himself passed hours in each other's society, and their mutual fondness was displayed in various ways. She reserved for her little favourite all the apple-pips and crumbs of cake, which were considered by him as the greatest dainties; and he appeared to do every thing in his power to cheer her solitude, by piping the notes of his pretty song, which was a very plaintive air; and by all those little endearments by which he so well knew how to express his regard. The door of his cage was usually left open; and he would fly out, perch on the arm of his mistress's chair, and take food from her mouth. To some of her visitors he showed a decided preference, which he testified by sitting on the shoulder or head of the chosen friend, and singing the few notes he remembered of his little song. To others who approached

his cage, his open beak and threatening attitude plainly proved that he considered them unwelcome intruders.

When his kind mistress died, he was taken by her daughter, Mrs. F. to her distant residence in the west of England, to which we have before alluded. He soon selected Mrs. F. and her youngest daughter Mary for his peculiar favourites: to the other members of the family he seemed, for some time, perfectly indifferent. Mary scarcely knew, at first, how to manage with all her pets. Her little dog, and her demure tortoiseshell cat, (a most accomplished bird-catcher,) had long been established as inmates of the parlour, and would not patiently brook the indignity of being discarded for a new friend. But how could the feathered favourite be permitted to have the free range of the apartment, while his natural enemies were in the room? This difficulty, however, was soon overcome; for it was not long before they became so well acquainted, as to take little notice of each other; and the cat and bird have been accidentally left together, without any disastrous consequences.

It is impossible for those who never saw this interesting bird, to imagine the discriminating fondness he displayed for those who were the objects of his affection. The reasons which

guided his choice were not always apparent; and his dislike, which in some instances was as striking as his partiality in others, seemed to have no better foundation than his own wayward fancy. Still his prepossessions were generally constant, and did not, at any rate, seem to be the mere caprice of the moment. His fondness for Mrs. F. was uniform, until about a year after he came into her possession, when he became very ill, during the moulting season. After that time he did not discover any particular fondness for her, though no cause of offence could be remembered.

The person on whom he fixed as the object of his most active hostility, was Mrs. F.'s eldest daughter. Though she was not so fond of animals as her younger sister, and had never taken so much notice of him, still she frequently offered him his favourite apple-pips, and had never, in any way that she knew of, either vexed or hurt him. He at length wrought up his little spirit to such animosity against her, that when he was hopping about the table after dinner, partaking of the fruit, he would occasionally fly at Anne's face, and try to peck her; and once he actually suspended himself by his beak fastened to her lip. After having exhausted himself by these assaults, he would fly across the table to Mary, and in a moment assume a dif-

ferent character. He would begin his little song, his head and tail keeping a sidelong motion to the tune: he would sit on her shoulder, and rub himself against her neck or face, as if he scarcely knew how to show all the fondness he felt for her. Sometimes the mere sound of Anne's voice would impel him to renew his hostile attacks on her; and leaving Mary, he would fly again to Anne, and bite her like a little fury.

Many attempts were made to deceive him by the sisters changing seats, but he quickly discovered the imposition. The only thing which ever deceived him, was when Mary threw a handkerchief over her head: he then, for a moment, mistook her for a stranger.

From some cause, perhaps from his leading a life unsuited to his nature, his claws were very much diseased. They became more so at every moulting season; so that at last all the claws on one leg were entirely gone, and those on the other so much mutilated that he could no longer grasp his perch. He was therefore obliged to remain on the floor of his cage, a situation which could not fail to be uncomfortable to him. Still, in other respects, he appeared to be in perfect health; and the beautiful state of his plumage, always bright and smooth, not a single feather ruffled, was a proof of this. In all probability

he would have lived much longer, had it not been for the inconsiderate deed of some little boys, who were visiting Mrs. F. in the summer of 1829. They had often been warned not to touch or frighten the bullfinch. One day, when he had quitted his cage, and was enjoying the free range of the sitting-room, these little boys, seized by one of those sudden impulses which often hurry lively children into thoughtless acts of disobedience, sprung from their seats, and before any one could stop them, chased the poor bird violently round the room, till he dropped down quite exhausted. He was immediately taken up, and his feet put into warm water, in the hope of restoring him—but in vain. His delicate frame could not sustain so rude a shock, and the pet bullfinch was no more. Every one lamented that his last moments should have been rendered so unhappy. It will readily be believed that the death of so interesting a bird was sincerely regretted. Tears were shed for his loss, and an honourable place of sepulchre appointed for him, at the foot of a cedar on the lawn.

THE SONG OF THE CAPTIVE BULLFINCH.

I dwelt with one whose soul was love,
Patient and gentle as the dove;
And now that she hath passed away,
And hears no more my grateful lay,
Oh! do not think I mourn her not,
Who sweetly soothed my lonely lot.
Did she not feed and cherish me,
And make me blest as bird could be,
Until my captive state seemed sweet,
My prison-home a loved retreat?
When summer skies were clear and bright,
She hailed my strains with fond delight;
And when I sung in wintry days,
She gave my music double praise;
And while my plaintive notes she heard,
She call'd herself a captive bird,
And said that age, with heavy hand,
Had bound her with his iron band,
And bade her feet no longer roam
Beyond her calm sequester'd home,
And hung before her eyes a veil,
And bade her flagging spirits fail.
And then I heard her lips declare
There was a land of purer air—
A land unswept by stormy gale,
Unsaddened by the captive's wail.

I loved those words of gentle tone,
Though half their meaning was unknown;
And when I heard her voice no more,
I deemed her captive state was o'er;
And, freed from every fettering band,
She sought and found that lovely land.

Oh! do not think I mourn her not,
Who sweetly soothed my lonely lot.
Her sainted form no more I see:
I know not what my fate may be.
But ye who loved my mistress dear,
Will still her feathered favourite cheer,
And hang my cage in verdant bowers,
And wreathe its wires with fragrant flowers.

And thou, whose form of youthful grace
Is hovering round my resting-place,
With glossy hair, and sparkling eye,
And voice that sounds so cheerily;
For thee my plaintive song I'll sing,
Till ruffled plumes and drooping wing
Proclaim my little life is fled,
And I am number'd with the dead;
No more with softly warbled trill,
To tell thee that I love thee still.

Then, Mary, let thy bird be laid
Beneath the cedar's pleasant shade;
Nor let thy heart in after days
Lose all remembrance of my lays,
But listen to thy captive's prayer;
And when some wanderer of the air
Pours on thy ear his sweetest strain,
Think of thy feathered friend again.

ORDER PASSERES.

The Raven.

Corvus corax.

"THIS bird," says Cuvier, "is the largest of the Passerine Order found in Europe, being as big as a cock: its plumage is entirely black, the tail round, the back of the upper mandible arched forward. It lives more retired than the other species, flies well and high, scents carcases at the distance of a league, and feeds, moreover, on all sorts of fruit and small animals. It will even carry off the tenants of the poultry-yard. It builds singly on high trees and sharp rocks. Its flight is easy and elevated. It seems to be found in all parts of the world."

To this sketch we may add, that the ravens are a fearless race, defending themselves successfully from the attacks of cats and dogs, and even rendering themselves formidable to men, whose legs they will peck at with so much fury, as to inflict very considerable wounds.

They are said to be greatly attached to each

other, living the whole year round in pairs. It is asserted, that the same pairs remain together for years, and probably for the whole of their lives. They build a very capacious nest, and in it the female deposits, about March, five or six pale blueish and greenish eggs, lined and spotted with a neutral tint. In twenty days the young ones are hatched, and are ready to fly about May. As long as they are not fully able to procure their own food, the parent birds continue to bring them a daily supply. Long after they are able to fly, the nest continues to be their place of refuge and of rest: here the whole of the dark-plumed family assemble in the evening, and pass the night together; this they do till quite the end of the summer, which has led some persons to entertain the erroneous idea that they rear two broods in a season.

When they are at length considered able to provide for themselves, the old birds drive them from the nest, to seek their fortunes elsewhere. Unenlightened and superstitious people look on the raven as a bird of ill omen, giving warning of approaching evil by its sullen croak.

> "The raven ominous, (as Gentiles hold,)
> What time she croaketh hoarsely *à la morte*."

Its love of solitude, and the habit it has of frequenting lonely, deserted ruins, has added to the

gloomy character of the bird: yet there are many interesting recollections connected with its name, not at all of a mournful nature. The raven sent forth by Noah is familiar to us from our childhood; the first of all the voluntary prisoners in the ark of gopher-wood, which escaped from its temporary prison, and flew over the ruined world with unfettered wing. Still more familiar, and endeared to our feelings, is the touching and beautiful story of the persecuted prophet; hidden from his enemies by the secret brook Cherith, and daily fed, in time of famine, by the ravens, who brought him bread and meat every morning and every evening, commissioned to sustain the man of God, by Him who heareth the young ravens when they cry. Neither can we forget the beautiful allusion to this bird, in the discourses of our blessed Saviour, as related by St. Luke. There is also, in the Book of Job, another mention of the raven, which has made a deep and lasting impression on many a youthful heart, connected as it is with a fearful threatening. That animated and delightful writer, Dr. E. D. Clarke, gives the following striking narrative as an instance of the literal fulfilment of the passage to which we allude. It was in travelling through the forests of Scandinavia, that the circumstance fell under his notice.

"Just before we reached Oljochi, an open space in the forest, cleared for the purpose, exhibited upon three wheels, the mangled carcase of a miscreant Finn, who, in a fit of intoxication, had cut off a woman's head with an axe. His head was placed upon one wheel, his right hand upon another, and his body, dressed in the habit of his nation, upon the third, between the other two. The punishment of criminals for capital offences, in Sweden, requires that the right hand be struck off before the culprit is beheaded. We halted for a few moments, to make a sketch of this fearful spectacle. Amidst the gloom and solitude of the forest, where the silence was that of death itself, it was indeed a sight that spoke terrible things. The body of a human creature, thus exposed to the birds of prey, by the side of a public road, cannot fail of affecting the mind of every passenger. The enormity of the crime itself is almost absorbed in a feeling of pity, called forth by the exemplary nature of the punishment. And this poor Finn, it is said, had a father and a mother, 'who watched, and toiled, and prayed' for him; whose good counsels were disregarded, until the awful moment arrived, when, faithful in its threatenings, the warning voice of Scripture was fulfilled: 'The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his

mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.'"

Turning aside from this appalling scene of crime, and its punishment, we will call your attention once more to the peculiar habits of the bird, as exhibited in its determined adherence to the spot it has chosen for its abiding place. The naturalist of Selborne, to whose pages we always refer with pleasure, has furnished us with a story, which exhibits this propensity in the utmost perfection, and on which the following little poem is founded.

THE RAVEN TREE.

Wouldst thou the strong hold of the raven see?
Go, mark where she sits on her ancient tree;
There long she hath dwelt, the queen of the wood,
Where the lofty oaks for ages have stood.
There hath she sat, when the summer's bright beam,
To her glossy wings gave a purple gleam;
And there hath she dwelt, when the winter sky
Sent the blast of the tempest howling by.
'Tis her own beloved abiding place,
And a tower of strength to her infant race;
And a living rampart girds it around,
For nature hath cast up the swelling mound:
Nor man nor beast can the barrier clear,
And she nestles there safely from year to year.
There she sits, and the raven's croak,
Is nightly heard from the lofty oak.

'Tis the raven tree, and its leafy screen
Hath ever her covert and fortress been;
But the woodman comes, and the ancient oak
Is trembling beneath his powerful stroke:
She deems it the gust of the stormy breeze,
As it bends the boughs of the forest-trees.
Again the strong column shakes to its base,
But the raven is still in her resting-place:
The tall tree trembles, and totters, and swings,
And still she is seen with her out-spread wings;
Till with thundering crash to the ground it falls,
And scatters in ruins her castle walls:
That thundering crash was her funeral knell,
To earth, with her nest, the poor raven fell,
And never more was her solemn croak
Heard from the boughs of the lofty oak.

THE RAVEN.

"Hide thyself by the brook Cherith, which is before Jordan, and it shall be that thou shalt drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there."—1 KINGS, xvii. 3, 4.

Dark raven, when thy note I hear,
Why should it fill my heart with fear?
I'll look upon thy sable wing,
And think of Cherith's secret spring,
And of the prophet's wond'rous fare,
Who sought the hidden waters there.

Thy rushing wing, dark-mantled bird,
The holy seer with gladness heard,
When famine raged on ev'ry side,
And founts and flowing streams were dried;
But still, in Cherith's quiet vale,
The crystal waters did not fail.

From fields uncheered by rain or dew,
To Cherith's brook the ravens flew,
Morning and eve, on pinions fleet,
Hov'ring around the lone retreat;
By secret impulse thither led,
To bring the exile daily bread.

Dark-mantled bird, I'll welcome thee,
Thou hast no omens dire for me.
Recorded on the sacred page,
That tale descends from age to age,
And still the raven's sable plumes,
As with a glorious light illumes.

I turn with fond delight to trace
The story of thy ancient race,
And think, how in their hour of need,
God can his faithful children feed.
There may be want, there may be woe,
But still the hidden stream will flow.
There may be deep, heart-withering care,
But Cherith's brook forbids despair.

ORDER PASSERES.

The Rook.

Corvus frugilegus.—Linn.

Our readers will not require from us any very elaborate description of this well-known bird; he is, in truth, an every-day acquaintance, crossing

our path, flying over our heads, feeding in our fields, and cawing round our dwellings. Who is there who is not familiar with the stately avenue, the tall group of trees, or the sheltered grove where these amusing birds take up their abode? Who has not watched them clamouring and quarrelling over every stick and straw in their nests, as if it were a gem of value, a diamond of the first water?

"Rooks," says Bewick, "are often accused of feeding on the corn just after it has been sown; but, in our estimation, the advantages derived from the destruction which they make among grubs, larvæ, worms, and noxious insects, greatly overpay the injury done, by the small quantity of corn they may destroy in searching after their favourite food. They live together in large societies, and build close to each other in trees, frequently in the midst of large and populous towns. These rookeries are often the scenes of bitter contests; the new comers are frequently driven away by the old inhabitants, their nests torn in pieces, and the unfortunate couple forced to begin their work anew in some more undisturbed situation."

It is singular, that birds living in such large communities, should be so quarrelsome; it seems as if such a propensity would peculiarly disqua-

lify them for social life, and make it more desirable that each pair should retire into solitude, and lead the same recluse life as the raven. But this is not their choice; they will dwell in the midst of their brethren if possible, though they are sure to be in a continual state of warfare during the building time, robbing and pulling to pieces each other's nests whenever an opportunity offers. Some unfortunate pairs are not permitted to finish a nest till the rest have all completed theirs. No sooner have they collected a few sticks, and laid the foundation, than in rush the marauders, tear the unfinished dwelling to pieces, and seize on the materials for their own use. When the nests are once fairly completed, a more peaceful state of affairs ensues; but noisy and clamorous they still remain. Perhaps it is then rather

"The clash of argument and jar of words,"

since the great source of contest, the materials for building, no longer excite their cabals. One thing is certain—were they less clamorous they would be less amusing.

Common as these birds are, and freely as they colonize in some places, they are, nevertheless, a very independent race, and will come at no man's bidding. We might sometimes fancy they

have a perverse pleasure in absenting themselves from the spots where their presence would be the most welcome. There is a delightful country residence, which we were accustomed to frequent some years since: it abounded in rural sights and sounds, and seemed to us to possess almost all the pleasant appendages of a country abode, except a rookery. The owner of the mansion, in common with every true lover of nature, coveted the society of the cawing race; but never could these wayward birds be lured into the neighbourhood, till a large dairy was established on the outskirts of the estate, on the borders of a fine range of pasture-ground. The dairy, and its picturesque accompaniments, attracted many visitors, and among others the rooks; a colony of these amusing birds soon established themselves on the loftiest trees in the adjoining coppice. There they have dwelt ever since, cawing and croaking; quarrelling and nest building; rearing their young; destroying the grubs in winter and spring, and devouring the corn in harvest, with all the characteristic energy of the tribe.

We cannot persuade ourselves to finish this chapter on rooks, without quoting from our favourite White, his animated sketch of their evening manœuvres, as he was wont to observe them

in his beloved village home. "The evening proceedings of the rooks are curious and amusing in the autumn. Just before dusk they return in a long string, from the foraging of the day, and rendezvous, by thousands, over Selborne Down, where they wheel round in the air, and sport and dive in a playful manner, all the while exerting their voices, and making a loud cawing, which being blended and softened by the distance that we at the village are below them, becomes a confused noise, or chiding; or, rather, a pleasing murmur, very engaging to the imagination, and not unlike the cry of a pack of hounds in hollow, echoing woods, or the rushing of the wind in tall trees, or the tumbling of the tide upon a pebbly shore. When this ceremony is over, with the last gloom of day, they retire for the night to the deep beechen woods of Tisted and Ropley. We remember a little girl, who, as she was going to bed, used to remark on such an occurrence, in the true spirit of *physico-theology*, that the rooks were saying their prayers; and yet this child was much too young to be aware that the Scriptures have said of the Deity, that 'He feedeth the ravens who call upon him.'"*

* White's Natural History of Selborne.

THE ROOK.

Social bird, thy harsh notes I love:
In the cheerful spring they tell
Of farm, and field, and grove,
And tall trees o'er the shelter'd dell.

Abroad in the dawning light,
Thou art soaring o'er hill and vale,
Till they fade in the shadows of night,
Then homeward thy dark wings sail.

There's a charm in those ceaseless caws
That mark thy active way;
There is scarcely an idle pause
In thy busy and useful day.

Let us learn, as we listen to thee,
And gaze on thy rapid flight,
What the Christian's life should be,
As he labours in gladness and light.

L.

ORDER PASSERES.

The Common Nuthatch. Nut-jobber. Wood-cracker.

Sitta Europœa.

The nuthatch is an inhabitant of the woods of this country, particularly of the southern parts.

It resembles the woodpecker in some of its habits, and indeed it is, by some, called the blue woodpecker, though incorrectly. It feeds on nuts, seeds, and various kinds of insects: it is in pursuit of this part of its food, that it climbs the stems of trees, and taps them with its bill like the woodpecker. In the winter it is sometimes seen in orchards and gardens; but its habitual dwelling is in the woods: here it makes its nest in the hollow of a tree. The hen bird is said never to quit the eggs, and will allow herself to be taken rather than abandon them. During the time she is sitting, she is said to be wholly dependent on the male bird for her food; and he, on his part, is singularly attentive to his little companion. As soon as the young ones can do without the assistance of a parent, they all separate, and each bird lives a hermit life the rest of the year. The hollow trees which furnish these birds with sheltered places for rearing their young, serve also for their nightly resting-places at other seasons: here, too, they store up their hoards of provision for winter food.

The nuthatch, remaining with us all the year, prudently prepares for the approach of a season when the fruits of the earth will be gathered in, and the insect tribes safely secured in their winter hiding-places. In the autumn this thrifty

little bird is seen collecting its stores of nuts and grains, such as hemp-seed, &c. and secreting them in the garners nature has provided for them in the midst of the woods. Nothing is more remarkable in the habits of this clever and active little creature, than the manner in which it gets at the kernel of the nut. Having placed a nut firmly in the crack of a tree, he takes his station a little above it, and striking it with all his force, pierces the shell and takes out the kernel. If he happens to be disturbed at his work, he removes the nut instantly, and flies away with it.

A touching anecdote of this bird is related by a writer in the Magazine of Natural History. Having slightly wounded a nuthatch, he succeeded in capturing it, and carried it home, with the hope of watching its habits more closely. The poor bird, however, could ill brook his captivity, and at the end of two days died; having kept up, during that time, an almost incessant and laborious tapping at the wood-work of his cage, which bears lasting marks of the energy with which he toiled to force his way to freedom. Some of those who watched the untiring efforts of the little prisoner, observed that he was nailing his own coffin, and so it seemed: his labours ceased but with his life. For the details of the anecdote, we refer our readers to the Magazine

of Natural History, Nov. 1828. The following lament is founded on this circumstance.

THE LAMENT OF THE CAPTIVE NUTHATCH.

From my native haunts in the forest glade,
From my pleasant home in its waving shade,
They've borne me away to the captive's cell,
And they thought I might there in comfort dwell;
And the spoiler stands by my prison grate,
And with wonder looks on my restless state.

"Rest, rest," cries the spoiler, "O rest thee now,
Thou art safe as beneath the forest bough;
Oh! rest, little captive, I pray thee, rest,
Though far, far away from thy woodland nest:"
But vainly the voice of the spoiler is heard,
Inviting to slumber, his captive bird.

"Rest, rest thee," he cries; but I cannot rest,
So far, far away from my woodland nest—
From the loved ones I left in the forest bowers,
And the freedom and joy that once were ours.
A captive, and wounded, say, can there be,
Peace or repose in this prison for me?

I prepare my tomb for the coming hour,
When death shall set bounds to the spoiler's power;
If I pause for a moment, sorrow and pain
Summon me back to my labour again.
My loved ones are lost, my freedom is flown,
I have only to make my dying moan.

Unceasing the toil of that captive one,
From the dawn of day to the set of sun:
When the shadows of night around him fell,
There was silence and peace in his lonely cell;
For the pris'ner's weary toil was o'er,
And the requiem strain was heard no more.

Dost weep for the captive?—weep freely then:
But knowst thou, my child, there are captive men?
Oh! canst thou not hear how their plaintive wail
Is borne from afar on the ocean gale?
Weep, weep for the captive, on land and sea,
And pray for the hour when the slave shall be free.

The nuthatch is of so shy and timid a character, that it is not very often seen. Its flight is gentle, and its movements easy and graceful. While it is climbing about the trees, it utters its cry of *ti, ti, ti, ti, ti,* with great rapidity: besides this cry, and the noise it makes in tapping the bark, it produces a singular sound, either by putting its bill into chinks, or rubbing it against the dry, hollow branches—this can be heard to a considerable distance. The notes of this bird cannot be said to be in themselves harmonious, and yet there is a charm in such sounds, heard amid the forests, with all the delightful accompaniments of woodland scenery, and what Evelyn terms "the innocent felicity of gardens and groves." And thus the simple note of the nuthatch, or the laugh of the woodpecker, becomes as attractive to the lover of nature, as more perfect strains of melody. So lovely, in truth, is Nature even now, marred as her beauty is by sin and sorrow, and so strongly does she still bear the impress of her high and holy origin, that we doubt not many of our young readers are ready to exclaim with the poet—

"Oh! Nature, how in every charm supreme,
Thy votaries feast in glories ever new:
Oh! for the voice and fire of seraphim,
To sing thy glories with devotion due."

We quote from the notes of the ornithological friend, our obligations to whom we have before acknowledged, a few additional remarks on the peculiarities of this bird. "The nuthatch is quicker in its movements than the woodpecker, and is peculiar in its descent. I have observed that the green woodpecker mostly alights on the lower parts of the branches of trees to ascend; the nuthatch more frequently on higher parts to descend; and this he does often perpendicularly, but sometimes making evolutions. I do not know that this coming down head foremost is worth alluding to—but it has often amused me. The eggs, &c. of this bird are well described by Bewick. You will also see in his work, p. 114, the character Buffon gives of the climbing birds, an erroneous one, I think.

"Wilson, in his American Ornithology, gives a very different account: he compares them to industrious workmen, and considers them very happy. I am of his opinion—I can fancy them the happiest of mechanics. Wilson adds, that these birds, the whole woodpecker race, are most useful in pointing out the trees which are beginning to decay; it is only such they assail, for

they do not attack sound trees, because insects do not abound in them as they do in the trunks and limbs of those less vigorous and healthy.—W. K."

SONG OF THE NUTHATCH.

Lone forest-bird, in thee I find,
Meet emblem of the cultured mind,
That passes on from day to day,
Still gath'ring treasures on its way,
And heaping up a precious store
From nature's gifts, and bookmen's lore;
Sweet flowers that do not fade with time,
And fruits that still retain their prime
Through all the wint'ry hours of age,
As in our earlier pilgrimage.

Lone bird, who lov'st the forest shrine,
Creatures more blest than thee and thine,
With gladness hail the welcome hours,
That lead them to the forest bowers;
And there are minds of loftier tone,
Souls that a purer influence own,
Who seek and find, while yet on earth,
Pleasures that claim celestial birth,
And in some calm retirement love
To plume their wings and soar above.

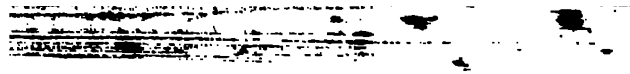
Oh! worldly spirits cannot tell
How sweet it is with these to dwell;
All their supplies unfailing are,
Their table spread with angels' fare;
On food the world knows not they feed,
Still richest in their hour of need.
Gifts from the promised land are theirs,
Fruits that the vine of Eschol bears,
And heaven's own dews descending bless,
Their sojourn in the wilderness.

ORDER PASSERES.

Humming-Bird.

Trochilus.

THESE beautiful little creatures are the most diminutive of all the feathered race. They are found only in America, and most abundantly in the hottest parts of South America, between the tropics. There are birds which very much resemble them, found both in Asia and Africa; but they differ in some respects, and naturalists now call them by other names, and confine that of humming-bird to these little gems of the American forest. The brightness of their colours, and the elegance of their forms, can only be imagined by those who have seen them. When flying in the sun, they look as if they were covered with gems and gold. The native American Indians, struck with the splendour of their hues, have called them "the hairs of the sun." The smallest humming-bird is of a grey violet colour, and the size of a bee. There are others, three or four inches long; and one, called the *giant hum-*



ming-bird, is about the size of the common martin. Little idea of the brilliancy of their colouring can be conveyed by description, as we have before observed; and yet the very reading of such exquisite hues excites the imagination, and makes a bright vision of these gleaming creatures float before our eyes. Here is one, the *amethyst humming-bird:* "throat and part of the neck brilliant amethyst, changing into purple brown." Here is the *Surinam humming-bird:* "green gold above, beneath greyish white; crescent of red on the breast." Here is another from Nootka Sound: "head rich variable green and gold, ruby-coloured ruff round the neck." Now look at the *superb humming-bird:* "crown of head sky-blue; throat brilliant scarlet; back, wings, and tail, gold green; pale beneath." Some of these beautiful creatures have splendid tufts on their heads. One has a crest of emerald green: another, of the brightest glossy blue: another, a large cluster of violet plumes: another has a gold tuft over each eye. Are not your eyes dazzled by these brilliant colours? Truly we could fancy ours are while we write of them.

The flight of these little birds is so rapid, that the motion of the wings cannot be perceived; and when the bird is hovering in the air, it appears to be quite immoveable. The quick motion

of the wings produces the humming sound from which the bird derives its name.

This little creature has a very long tongue, curiously formed, so as to enable it to suck up the nectar from the bells of flowers. This nectar is its chief, if not its only food. It is seen to pause for a few instants before a flower, with its long tongue inserted into it. Then it darts like an arrow to another, plunging its tongue into the bosom of every flower it visits, in search of its sweet food. These birds are never seen on the ground: they pass the night and the heat of the day among the branches of the trees. They are not birds of song: were they, it must be the music of fairy-land. But though they cannot be said to sing, they utter a short cry, as they fly from one flowering plant to another: this cry is described as resembling the syllables *te-re*, more or less sharp and strong.

It was long supposed impossible to bring the humming-bird alive to this country; but one instance has occurred, as the following well-authenticated anecdote, related by Dr. Latham, will show.

"A young man, a few days before he departed from Jamaica, surprised a female humming-bird while she was hatching. Having caught it, and desiring to procure the nest without injuring it,

he cut the branch on which it was, and carried the whole on ship-board. The bird became sufficiently tame to suffer herself to be fed with honey and water during the passage; and hatched two young ones. The mother, however, did not long survive; but the young ones were brought to England, and continued some time in the possession of Lady Hammond. These little creatures readily took honey from the lips of her ladyship with their bills. One of them did not live long, but the other survived at least two months after their arrival."

It is difficult to keep these lovely and delicate creatures alive in a state of captivity, even in a climate much more favourable to their preservation than ours. Dr. Latham mentions, as a rare occurrence, the success of general Davis, who kept several ruby humming-birds alive for some months. He fed them with honey and syrup, which he dropped into the tubes of artificial flowers; so that the little creatures might suck it out with their long tongues, as they did from the natural flowers in a state of freedom. In the centre of each of these artificial flowers, a tube, formed of a piece of tobacco-pipe, was fixed; and this became the receptacle of the honey. It was a very elegant device, to make the drinking vessels of the little captives resemble those natural

vases, out of which they were wont to sip their daily portion in the flowery fields where they first fluttered their brilliant wings, with other gay creatures of their kind. But, happily, even with the most ingenious contrivances, they cannot long be kept alive when deprived of freedom; and therefore few are caught for that purpose.

THE HUMMING-BIRDS.

Bright birds of the sun, how has every hue
Of the sky and the rainbow been lavish'd on you!
What are the robes that a monarch enfold,
Compared with your feathers of silver and gold?
Ye are richly arrayed, without toil and care,
And the flower-bells furnish your daily fare:
A feast every morning before you is spread;
Ye are gloriously clothed, and luxuriously fed.
And ye drink the pure nectar, and cry *te-re*,
As ye fly from the flower to the blossoming tree.

Swift as an arrow ye hasten along:
Now ye are gleaming the lilies among;
Now through the gardens of roses you speed;
Now on the lofty magnolias you feed.
Gay birds of the sun! your plumes are as bright,
As if you had bathed in his fountain of light.
It is lovely indeed your wings to behold,
All gleaming and glistening with azure and gold,
While ye drink the pure nectar, and cry *te-re*,
As ye fly from the flower to the blossoming tree.

KING FISHER.

ORDER PASSERES.

The Kingfisher. Halcyon.

Alcedo Ispida.

THE ancients had many superstitions connected with these birds; and to the present day they are held in great veneration in some parts of the world. The Greeks called the common species Alcyon, from Alcyone, the wife of Ceyx. Ceyx being accidentally drowned, Alcyone, as "the fabling poets fein," threw herself into the sea, and they were both transformed into kingfishers. One strange legend universally credited was, that these birds hatched their eggs on the waves; and that, on certain days in the year, they might be seen floating tranquilly over the waters, thus occupied. During this season, it was believed that the tempests were charmed to rest, and no chilling breeze had permission to ruffle the azure wing of the halcyon, as she glided peacefully along; until, having hatched her young, she quitted the waters, and left the imprisoned winds at liberty to lift up their stormy voices again, and

renew their eternal warfare with the billows. It is to this Milton alludes in the following quaint but beautiful lines, from his unrivalled Ode on the Nativity.

" The winds with wonder whist,
Smoothly the waters kist,
Whispering new joys to the mild ocean,
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding o'er the charmed wave."

The flight of the kingfisher is extremely rapid. Destined to live by destroying other creatures, its leading characteristics are patience, perseverance, and courage. Perched on a slight branch overhanging a stream, it will remain a great length of time waiting the passage of its prey beneath. Sometimes moving rapidly along the banks, it detects the fish with its keen glance, and seizes them with the utmost dexterity. The eagerness with which it darts into the water after its prey, is quite extraordinary. At other times it will skim swiftly over the surface of the water, uttering a sharp cry, and seizing such fish as may come within its reach.

Cuvier thus describes the bird: " The European kingfisher is as large as a sparrow: greenish above, waved with black: a broad band of the finest aqua-marine blue prevails along the back.

The under part, and a band on each side the neck are reddish."

This, however, is not an accurate description of the kingfisher which frequents our streams, and which has no black on any part of its plumage.

THE KINGFISHER.

Did you never the royal kingfisher see,
Resting himself on the willow tree?
Lightly he sits on the bending spray,
And watches the course of his finny prey;
Then swiftly he skims o'er the crystal stream,
And his wings with azure and emerald gleam.
The king of the fishing tribe is he,
And he is clad right royally.

The emerald shines on his kingly head,
And his corset is of ruby red:
An emerald mantle is on his back,
Varied with waves of ebon black;
And a lovely band of the brightest blue,
Gives to the whole a glorious hue.
The king of the fishing tribe is he,
And he is clad right royally.

Perhaps you love, with your rod in hand,
By the flowing stream to take your stand;
Perhaps you have long an angler been,
As well as the bird in azure and green:
But whether your craft be old or new,
He will have better sport than *you*.
The king of the fishing tribe is he,
And he can fish right royally.

CHAPTER II.

THE THIRD ORDER.

SCANSORES OR CLIMBERS.

This order is composed of birds whose external toe is directed backwards, like the thumb, whereby they have a more solid support, of which some of the genera avail themselves, by hanging and climbing on the trunks of trees. Hence they have been named, in common, climbers, *(scansores;)* although, strictly speaking, the term does not apply to them all; and many birds climb without belonging to this order, by the arrangement of the toes, as the creepers and nuthatches.

The birds proper to this order build, in general, in holes of old trees. Their flight is middling. Their food, like that of the Passeres, consists of insects and fruits, according as their bill is more or less strong. Some, as the woodpeckers, have peculiar means of obtaining their food.—*Cuvier.*

ORDER SCANSORES.

The Green Woodpecker.

Picus Viridis.

THIS is one of those shy birds which is not very often seen, except by those whose business or

GREEN WOODPECKER.

pleasure leads them into the depths of the woods and forests, where it delights to dwell. It feeds on insects and larva; and its hard tongue is terminated by a horny point, which particularly fits it for seizing its prey. There is also a very singular mechanism connected with the tongue of this bird, which enables it to shoot it out to an astonishing length, in seizing the insects on which it feeds. It climbs trees generally in a spiral direction, and has the power of running along the branches with its head downwards, like a fly on the ceiling.

The green woodpecker is the most common of the European species. It utters a piercing cry, resembling the words *tiacacan, tiacacan;* with which it makes the woods resound. It has also another cry, occasionally heard, which is like a noisy burst of laughter, repeated thirty or forty times in succession. It has likewise a plaintive note, which it uses on the approach of rain; whence it is sometimes called the rain-fowl. But the sounds for which the woodpeckers are generally the most remarked, is their loud tapping on the barks of trees, which they strike with their strong bills, in order to rouse the insects, and drive them from their retreats. In spring and summer, the green woodpecker is sometimes found on the ground, in search of ants, which he

esteems a great delicacy. He will watch for them in the neighbourhood of an ant-hill, resting his long tongue on the ground, to receive them in their passage to and from the nest; and when his tongue is covered, he retires to eat them. Sometimes he makes a violent attack on the ant-hill itself, and makes the little creatures and their eggs alike his prey. At other times he is continually climbing trees, and striking them in the manner before described, with his bill. The noise may be heard to a considerable distance, and the strokes counted.

The woodpecker's nest is made in the hollow of a decayed tree. Tapping with his bill, he easily discovers the part where the trunk is hollow within; and he and his mate work alternately to open a way to the centre, by piercing the sound part of the wood with their bills. In doing this, they carefully throw out the chips. They often make a hole so deep in the tree, and penetrate by such a sloping passage, that the light of day can scarcely enter. Here they make a nest of moss and wood. The eggs are from four to six in number: they are quite white. During the time of hatching, the male and female rarely quit each other. They retire early in the evening to their hole, where they remain till daylight.

THE WOODPECKER.

Hail to thee, woodpecker, clothed in green!
How thy verdant mantle concealeth thee;
'Mid the waving foliage scarcely seen,
As thou climbest the boughs of the forest-tree.
The theme of the villager's song art thou,
The woodpecker tapping the hollow beech-bough.

Throughout all the land that song has been heard,
Yet thousands there are, who but for the song
Would never have known the name of the bird,
Or thought of its habits the woods among.
The theme of the villager's song is he,
The woodpecker tapping the hollow beech-tree.

The shepherd that rests in the beechen shade,
While his flocks in the level pastures graze:
The woodman at work in the forest-glade,
Or the sportsman threading the woody maze:
All these the green bird of the ballad may see,
The woodpecker tapping the hollow beech-tree.

Though I've marked the note of many a bird,
Wandering alone in the field or the wood,
The woodpecker's tapping but once have I heard,
As under the green boughs I silently stood;
For a shy and a timid bird is he,
The woodpecker tapping the hollow beech-tree.

ORDER SCANSORES.

The Cuckoo.

Cuculus Canorus.

THE cuckoo is supposed to pass the winter in Africa, and usually comes to us in the month of April, when we hear its monotonous but pleasant cry of *cuckoo*, which seems to proclaim to us that winter is gone, and the time of flowers is coming. Arrived in England, it generally betakes itself to the woods, and appears especially to delight in those which are situated on hills and mountains; from whence we may hear its simple, oft-repeated song, through the day, and to a late hour of the night. It feeds on insects, caterpillars, &c. and is said also to eat the eggs of small birds.

The most curious circumstance in the history of this bird is, that it never builds a nest itself, but lays its eggs in the nests of other birds. The nests she chooses for this purpose are usually those of birds smaller than herself; and she takes the precaution to deposit only one in a nest, though she lays from four to six in a season;

evidently aware that there will not be room for more than one of her great children to be cradled in so confined an abode. It has been often asked in what manner the female cuckoo introduces her eggs into nests which are either so small in their dimensions, or so contracted in their entrance, that she cannot possibly get into them. It now seems ascertained that the mode she adopts is to carry an egg in her bill, and drop it into the nest she has chosen. The young cuckoo, soon after it is hatched, usually turns out of the nest the eggs or young birds of its foster-mother. But though the cuckoo thus puts out her children to be nursed, she by no means deserts them, or ceases to feel a parental interest in her progeny. She has been seen to hover round the tree where the young bird is lodged, singing near it, and evidently answering its cries with her song; as if willing to visit and pay it kind attentions, though she cannot take the trouble of nursing. We must not blame the poor cuckoo for this peculiarity, but should rather regard the circumstance as a singular instance of the provision made by the great Author of Nature for every living creature.

The cuckoo does not seem fitted, like other birds, to undertake the charge of hatching and rearing her young; but she is directed, by the

unfailing instinct implanted in her nature, where to seek a supply of her wants; and the bird whose nest she selects is, by a similar wonderful instinct, inclined to feed and cherish the stranger thus intruded upon her.

Cuckoos may be heard from April to the end of June, when they generally cease to sing; but they do not leave this country till the beginning or middle of September. The early cold, and the scarcity of insects and soft fruits, drive them to seek refuge in warmer climates. They take their flight at this season to the fruitful islands of the Grecian Archipelago, and into Africa; from whence they come back to us in the spring, and again cheer us with their well-known song.

Cuckoos are not usually seen in numbers, but such congregations sometimes occur. A friend of ours had, for many years, an aged apple-tree in his orchard, which he was wont to call the cuckoo-tree. Every spring this particular tree was visited, not by a solitary bird, but by perfect flocks of cuckoos, who flew around it or rested on its branches, making an extraordinary uproar; mixing with their well-known cuckoo notes various strange cries and croakings, and altogether producing a very uncommon sort of concert. Day after day, for about a week after their arrival in England, they visited the apple-

tree, and after amusing themselves in this way, flew off to their various haunts.

The tree so completely acquired the name of the bird, that the fruit it bore came to be distinguished from the other produce of the orchard, as apples from the cuckoo-tree. At length the fall of the venerable tree was decreed. It was cut down a few years since; and from that time, no such flocks of cuckoos have congregated there. The cuckoo-note is still heard in the orchard, and the birds have evidently not deserted the neighbourhood; but the fall of their tristing-tree seems to have broken the charm which gathered them to one spot.

THE CUCKOO'S SONG.

Cuckoo! cuckoo! cuckoo! I cry:
I come to tell that the paths are dry:
I come to tell that the frost is gone,
And a cheerful time is coming on;
For the wint'ry storms are heard no more,
And the smiling spring stands at the door;
And radiant skies, and balmy showers,
Will cover the fields with leaves and flowers.

Cuckoo! cuckoo! cuckoo! I sing;
And welcome news to the land I bring.
I have flown afar, over earth and sea,
In England's pleasant vallies to be,

When the daisy decks the village-green,
And the early primrose-flowers are seen;
When the forest-buds begin to swell,
And the violets spring in the sheltered dell.

Cu ckoo! cuckoo! cuckoo! I cry,
And the children hear me joyfully;
As with laugh and bound they hasten out,
The valley rings with their merry shout.
Gleeful and gladly they frolic along,
And cheerily mock the cuckoo's song.
Cuckoo! cuckoo! cuckoo! they cry;
They are light of heart, and so am I.

ORDER SCANSORES.

Honey-Cuckoo.

Cuculus Indicator.

THE indicators are species of cuckoo found in Africa, and celebrated for feeding on honey. They serve as guides in the discovery of the hives of wild honey. Among these, one of whose habits the most minute details have been given, is the honey-cuckoo. This bird is found in various parts of Africa; and its favourite food is honey, and the larvæ of bees. On these delicacies, however, it cannot regale; until the bee's-

nest has been opened, either by man or some animal stronger than itself. Nature has endowed it with so keen a scent for honey, that it can discover the nests of the wild bees, however carefully they may be concealed. Thus gifted, the indicator threads the mazes of the forest, and traces the wild bee to its home; acting as a guide both to man and a quadruped called the ratel, leading them with the utmost accuracy to the spot where the nectareous hoard is deposited. Its mode of communicating the discovery it has made, as related by Vaillant, is truly wonderful. Morning and evening are its principal meal-times. It is then that it usually comes forth, and uttering its cry of *cheer*, *cheer*, *cheer*, seems to invite the honey-hunters to follow him through the pathless wilderness. This signal is gladly hailed by the natives, or colonists, who may chance to hear it; and some person usually repairs to the spot whence the sound proceeds. The bird watches the approach of the hunter, and then flies slowly towards the quarter where the bee's-nest is to be found, continually repeating his cry of *cheer*, *cheer*, *cheer*. The hunter carefully follows his little guide, occasionally answering his call by a low, gentle whistle. As they draw nearer to the nest, the bird reiterates his cry with greater earnestness and frequency, as if

impatient of delay. Sometimes, in his eagerness to reach the point of attraction, he outstrips the speed of the hunters, and leaves them far behind: then turning back, he flies to meet them, and seems, by his redoubled cries, as if he would upbraid them for the tardiness of their movements, and urge them to proceed with greater rapidity. Arrived at the nest, the little bird stays his flight, and pausing, with outspread wing, hovers over the spot for a few seconds, long enough to indicate it to his followers: then flying to a neighbouring tree or bush, he conceals himself in the foliage, and patiently waits for his share of the booty, which the hunters do not fail to leave for one who has proved himself so much their benefactor.

These birds are considered so valuable by the inhabitants, that they will not permit any of them to be destroyed.

THE HONEY-BIRD'S SONG.

Give heed, give heed to the honey-bird's song,
With my *cheer*, *cheer*, *cheer*, the wild woods among;
Tho' far in the forest perchance I may fly,
The hunter of honey must follow my cry,
Till in clefted rocks, or in hollow trees,
I find out the stores of the forest-bees.
Give heed to my notes, so shrill and clear:
Come follow the honey-bird, *cheer*, *cheer*, *cheer*.

Oh! linger not, hunters, the way is long;
Come follow me swiftly the woods among:
Wherever the golden honey is stored,
I will guide your steps to the secret hoard;
For the wild bee's path through the sky I can trace,
And I follow the flight of their airy race.
Give heed to my notes, so shrill and clear:
Come follow the honey-bird, *cheer*, *cheer*, *cheer*.

And now let the foot of the hunter rest,
For we pause at last by the wild bee's nest.
Lo! here is honey enough and to spare:
Then refuse not your winged guide his share.
So the signal cry of your herald-bird,
Morning and evening shall duly be heard.
Give heed to my note, so shrill and clear:
Come follow the honey-bird, *cheer*, *cheer*, *cheer*.

CHAPTER III.

THE FOURTH ORDER.

GALLINÆ.

The Gallinaceous birds are so named from their affinity to the domestic cock.

This order is composed chiefly of a very natural family, remarkable for having furnished us with the most part of our domestic poultry, and with some excellent game.—*Cuvier.*

ORDER GALLINÆ.

The Ring-dove. Cushat.

Columba Palumbus.

This is the largest of the pigeon, or dove tribe. It is seventeen inches in length. It inhabits woods and forests, and selects the highest trees for its abode. It is so shy and retired a bird,

that we rarely see it, though its soft, gentle *coo*, may be heard in fine mild weather, by those who dwell in the neighbourhood of woods, or wander beneath their shade; and we know no sound more expressive of tranquil enjoyment than this soft wood-note, coming out of the depths of the grove or the forest, when the air is calm and the skies are blue, and the fields are arrayed in their summer loveliness. The greater part of the ring-doves are supposed to leave England in November: they pass over to the continents of Asia and Africa, and do not return till March. The cones of the pine, the fir, and the larch, furnish their favourite food; they likewise feed on beech-nuts, acorns, herbs, wild fruits and grains. In countries where the myrtle abounds, myrtle-berries seem their chosen dainties; and when thus fed, their flesh is said to acquire a particularly fine flavour. The ring-dove builds its nest on the tops of the highest trees. It rears two broods in the year, the first in April, the second in July. The eggs are rarely more than two. The male and female birds divide the labour of hatching them, and in sixteen or eighteen days the young birds make their appearance. This bird is found in most of the countries of Europe.

We need scarcely refer to the emblematic use

made of the dove by writers of every age, as a symbol of purity, gentleness, fidelity, &c. She is, indeed, surrounded by a bright halo of hallowed associations, some of which are of too sacred a nature to be lightly alluded to. We can never cease to turn with delight to that interesting page in the history of the world, in which the dove is first introduced to our notice, as one of the many inmates of the ark. From early infancy our attention is rivetted by the beautiful and touching narrative of the inspired historian, who describes the gentle bird going forth from her place of shelter, and returning thither again and again, until the overflowing waters, restrained once more within appointed limits, left the earth a fit dwelling-place for man, and bird, and beast.

Doves have been long held in the highest veneration by the Eastern nations. They were classed by Moses as clean birds, and might be offered in sacrifice by those who were too poor to bring a more costly oblation.

Names derived from that of the dove, in various oriental languages, seem to have been used as descriptive of loveliness, and were especially applied to beautiful women. The celebrated queen Semiramis is said to have derived her name from *semir-jemamah*, the brown or moun-

tain-dove; and in honour of her, the dove was used by the Syrians and Assyrians as a military ensign.

THE DOVE.

The dove hath left her safe retreat,
And flown abroad on pinions fleet;
O'er vale and mountain hath she sped,
And hath not where to rest her head.
No woodland nest, no shelt'ring tree,
No forest home her eye can see;
No place of rest her foot can find,
Save in the ark she left behind.

Forsaken ark! thy safe retreat
Fain would the weary wand'rer greet;
With flagging wing and feeble frame,
She seeks the home from whence she came.
And will the door unclose again,
Or shall the exile plead in vain?
Oh! not in vain her plaintive cry;
For there is One whose wakeful eye,
Still watching in the failing light,
Beholds from far her homeward flight,
Opens again the closed door,
And takes the wand'rer in once more.

Oh! rest thee now, thou wand'ring dove,
Bound by the silken cord of love;
Within that sacred ark remain,
Nor tempt the faithless world again.

THE CUSHAT, OR RING-DOVE.

When the flowers of May are seen,
And fields and woods again are green;
When summer skies are softly blue,
We hear the ring-dove's gentle *coo.*
That peaceful sound to me is dear,
I love that soft *coo, coo,* to hear.

It seems with sweet and gentle voice,
In nature's bounties to rejoice:
It seems to say, what home so blest,
So tranquil as the cushat's nest?
That soft *coo, coo,* to me is dear,
I love the peaceful sound to hear,

Wand'ring at eve the woods among,
I love to hear the ring-dove's song;
Or at the noon-tide's sultry hour,
Reposing in the sylvan bower.
That peaceful sound is ever dear,
I love that soft *coo, coo,* to hear.

Let me hear that gentle strain,
Soft cooing cushat, once again;
To my list'ning ear it seems
Like peaceful music heard in dreams.
That gentle sound is ever dear,
I love that soft *coo, coo,* to hear.

ORDER GALLINÆ.

The Wood-Grouse. Cock of the Wood, or Capercaile.

Tetrao Urogallus.

This beautiful bird, once abundant in the Highlands of Scotland, is now become rare. Its length is nearly three feet, and the extent of its wings nearly four. It is about the month of March or April, when the buds of the beech-tree begin to unfold, that the wood-grouse is to be seen in his summer retreats, among his native wooded mountains.

In a fanciful mood we might be almost inclined to give this bird the credit of being a lover of the picturesque. His chosen resort is said, generally, to be some mountain declivity, exposed to the earliest beams of the rising sun, in the neighbourhood of a torrent, and where the lofty pine-trees grow, furnishing him at once with a resting-place by night, and a tower of observation by day. On one of these pines the male bird may be found uttering the cry peculiar to his species, at the sound of which the females

assemble on the ground around the tree. With eyes sparkling, the feathers of the head and neck erect, the wings extended, the tail spread out and raised, the lordly bird paces over the thick branches, or parades along the trunk of a fallen tree, making the solitude resound with its cries: these may be heard from two o'clock in the morning till day-break; he then descends from the tree, and accompanies the birds assembled around him, often to the number of six or eight, in search of food. In the evening he returns to his post, and resumes his station on the lofty tree. The capercaile is so wary a bird, that though the sportsman may be acquainted with his haunts, and may invade them, on murderous thoughts intent, it is not easy to compass his destruction. It is impossible to get within gun-shot of him, except while he is uttering the cries we have described. If the fowler is still resolved to make him his prey, he should remain immoveable from the moment the bird is silent. It is said that the least motion will drive him away, and that the crackling of the leaves, or even an inconsiderate movement of the eyes, will put him on his guard; and when once he has discovered his danger, he is no longer approachable. The peculiar cry of which the fowler must take advantage, may be expressed by the syllables *he-*

de-he-de-he, frequently reiterated. But the bird has another cry, during the utterance of which it is useless to attempt getting near him, for he is then alive to the slightest sound, and can detect the gentlest movement; this cry we are told is something like *dod*, uttered several times, and then *do-del*, *do-del*, *dodelder*, repeated with astonishing rapidity. The organs of sight and hearing, in this species, appear to be perfect in an almost inconceivable degree.*

The capercaile was once to be met with in the mountainous parts of Ireland, as well as Scotland; but seems now to be nearly, if not quite extinct there. It is found in the vast forests of Germany, and is common in Sweden, Norway, and all the north of Russia. During the severe weather of the last winter, a novel scene was one day exhibited in London. A man, seated near the Exchange, had a table before him covered with some hundreds of the beautiful snow-white ptarmigan described in the next article, intermingled with some magnificent capercailes: they were dead, and frozen to stony hardness, and in this state had been brought over from Denmark as an adventure. They were speedily sold, and

* See Griffith's Cuvier, Supplement to the Order Gallinæ.

some were sent to a gentleman near Bristol, who presented a fine pair of each to the Philosophical Institution in that city, as a valuable addition to the treasures of the museum, where they may now be seen.

THE SONG OF THE WOOD-GROUSE.

You must look for me
On my mountain tree,
Where the hardy pine uncultured grows,
Where the foaming torrent wildly flows;
There look for me,
On my mountain tree,
With my clarion note *he-de-he-de-he.*

Where the sun's bright ray,
Doth earliest play,
Flinging his beams on the mountain side;
There in my chosen retreat I abide:
And the rocks reply
To my gathering cry,
As I sound my clarion notes on high.

From the twilight grey,
To the break of day,
The woodland and cliffs to my notes resound,
While I call my companions to gather around.
Then gaily I lead,
Where safely they feed,
And my gathering cry no longer they need.

Your hour is gone by,
To the forest I fly,
When once my clarion notes are o'er,
The wariest sportsman sees me no more.
You must look for me
On my mountain tree,
If ever the bonny wood-grouse you would see.

ORDER GALLINÆ.

The Ptarmigan-Grouse.

Tetrao Lagopus.

THE greater part of the gallinaceous tribes are inhabitants of warm or mild climates, and enjoy all the advantages of serene skies and fertile soils, rich in the productions of nature, abundantly supplying all their wants. There are, however, some species to whom the cold and cheerless wastes of the north are allotted: there they dwell, in the midst of snow-covered mountains, and wild scenes of desolate grandeur, sharing the dominions of these frozen regions with the few hardy animals who are, like themselves, fitted to endure the intensity of cold. Of all the species of gallinæ, the ptarmigan is the only one which is capable of braving the severity of these icy

climes. He who alone maketh us to differ, and whose wisdom adapts every creature to its appointed station, has singularly suited the ptarmigan to his alpine home. The fur-clad nobles of Russia are not provided with so complete a defence from the wintry blast, as these wild tenants of the snow-covered mountains. Like the household of Solomon's good wife, they need not fear the snow, for they are clad in double garments. Every part of their bodies is clothed with a thick down, and this again is covered by so close and massive a plumage, that the snow and rain cannot penetrate it, nor the icy gale pierce through it. Their feet and toes, instead of being naked, like others of their tribe, are furnished, like their legs, with downy feathers, very long and close, and far more abundant in winter than in summer.

Their food consists of berries, heath, alpine grasses, and the buds of mountain plants and shrubs. In winter they are said to feed chiefly on the buds of the rhododendron and pine; these being completely, and often very deeply covered with the snow, they could not reach them but for another gift of nature, which enables them to open these store-chambers wherein their winter's provision is so bountifully laid up for their use. Strong claws of a very peculiar structure, long and broad, enable them

to penetrate the snow to a great depth, in search of their hidden food. Nor is this all that is worthy of notice as fitting them for their wild abiding place: living in the midst of snows, if they had the bright colours of many of their race, they would have little chance of concealing themselves from their enemies; to afford them this security, a snow-white covering has been given them, which serves, in great measure, to hide them from the piercing glance of birds of prey, as it is very difficult to distinguish their silvery plumage from the gleaming whiteness of surrounding snows. They are found in the most northern parts of Europe, Asia, and America, where perpetual winter reigns, and on lofty mountains in the central parts of these continents.

The most common species is the ptarmigan-grouse, the lagopus of the ancients. This bird is found in various countries of central Europe and Asia, and also in North America. In this country it is only to be met with on the summits of some of our highest hills, chiefly in the highlands of Scotland, the Hebrides, the Orkneys, and sometimes, though but rarely, on the lofty hills of Cumberland, and the mountains of the Principality. Fitted to inhabit frozen regions, it dreads the influence of the sun, and is seldom found on the southern sides of mountains. In

the summer, these birds select spots which are sheltered from both sun and wind; as it seems wind is ungenial to them, though they delight in cold.

When the snowy season is past, they are no longer clothed in white, but their feathers assume a light brown, or ashen colour, which so closely resembles the hue of the rocks, in the midst of which they dwell, that the keen eye of their watchful enemy, the kite, cannot without difficulty detect their retreat. They make their summer abode amid the rocks, and on the mountainous platforms which are found at various stages of the alpine regions, above the wooded tracts that cover their base. During the heat of the day they conceal themselves beneath the tufts of rhododendrons and other shrubs, and are neither seen nor heard by the traveller until his foot almost touches them; then they suddenly escape, with a loud whirring noise of the wings, perfectly startling to the solitary wanderer. In the winter they descend somewhat lower; but never appear in the plains unless the season is unusually severe. When the mountains are wrapped in mist, and the heavy atmosphere indicates the approach of snow or rain, the shrill cries of the ptarmigans are incessantly heard. But when the air is light and pure, and the sky se-

rene, then they sail about in tranquil enjoyment, and pursue their flight in perfect silence.

The female lays from eight to fifteen eggs, of an oblong form and an ashen red colour, with spots of blackish brown. The ptarmigan is so wary a bird, that it can rarely be lured into snares of any kind, and is therefore usually pursued with a fowling-piece. All attempts to hatch and rear it, in a domestic state, have been unsuccessful. Fitted to live in the pure air of mountainous elevations, it is scarcely likely that it should thrive amid the heavier atmosphere of the plains. In fact, it would seem almost as much out of its element in the warm and fertile vallies of the south, as does the camel from the deserts of Arabia contending with the cold climate and stony soil of the northern regions.

SONG OF THE PTARMIGAN.

'Mid eternal snows
I love to repose:
When the waters in icy fetters are bound,
In the chambers of snow my portion is found.
I lay up no store,
'Mid the mountains hoar,
I have but to open their marble door.

I delight to sail
In the icy gale;
But the gentle breeze of the balmy spring
Would weaken the force of my snowy wing.
Where the mountains rise
To the azure skies,
Amid the pure ether the ptarmigan flies.

Tho' the birds that feed
In the grove or mead,
May rejoice in the range of their lower flight;
Yet the snowy crags of the Alpine height,
And the mountain air,
So free and rare,
I would not exchange for their valleys fair.

Oh! bid me not roam
From my mountain home;
The rich harvests that load the fertile plain,
With the luscious fruits and the golden grain,
Are less to my mind
Than the berries I find,
Waving on high in the keen mountain wind.

'Mid eternal snows
I love to repose;
I build not my nest in the shelter'd vale,
For my wing would flag in the southern gale.
To the Alpine height
I take my flight,
And there I dwell in a world of light.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIFTH ORDER.

WADERS, OR GRALLÆ,

Are named from their habits. They may be known by the nudity of the lower part of the legs, and, in general, by the height of their tarsi, circumstances which enable them to walk to a certain depth in the water without wetting their feathers, and thus to fish by means of their neck and bill, which are in general proportioned to the length of the legs. Those which have a strong bill, feed on fish and reptiles; those whose bill is weak, on worms and insects. A very small number of them feed partially on grains and herbs, and these alone live at a distance from the water. Almost all these birds, if we except the ostriches and the cassowary, have long wings, and are good flyers; they stretch their legs behind them in flight, contrary to other birds, who fold them up.—*Cuvier.*

ORDER GRALLÆ.

The Common Sandpiper.

Tringa Hypoleucos.

THE common sandpiper is not numerous in England, but it is often seen during the summer

months, seeking its insect prey on the pebbly margin of our lakes and rivers. It leaves us in the autumn; but to what place it wings its flight has not, we believe, been noticed. There is something peculiarly sweet and musical in the clear piping cry of this elegant little bird, as it skims along the shores of some of the northern lakes; the sound, on a still summer night, breaking at intervals on the ear, then dying away in the distance. These notes are rendered still more pleasing, by the circumstance of their being considered as certain indications of the continuance of fine weather, by the inhabitants of those districts in which the sandpiper takes up its summer abode.

In our island climate, it is always "a pleasant thing to behold the sun," and those sights and sounds of nature, which from their more frequent occurrence in warm and genial seasons, are supposed to foretel fine weather, are welcomed with cheerful, sometimes with almost affectionate feelings, by those whose amusements or employments lead them much into the open air.

The pretty scarlet pimpernel, with its appropriate name, the shepherd's weather-glass, though it brings not, like the song of the sandpiper, the hope of settled fine weather, is said only to expand its blossom in the morning, when no rain

falls during the day. Those who in childhood, at the commencement of an excursion in the country, have watched with anxiety for its beautiful, salver-shaped blossom and purple eye, will seldom pass it in their walks, without feeling as if they had been gladdened by the face of a kind and cheerful friend, wishing them a pleasant ramble, and promising the enjoyment of dry footpaths and sun-lighted prospects. The voice of such a friend, is that of the little sandpiper, to those who wander amidst the mountains of Westmoreland and Cumberland, or sail on their silver lakes.

THE SANDPIPER.

Gay little bird of the lake's green shores,
  Thy sweet wild notes the wanderer hails,
In the ling'ring pauses of homeward oars,
  Or the slow dull flapping of idle sails.

Night is hastening on ; but we hear thy song,
  And the deep'ning shadows no more we see ;
With light hearts now we are gliding along,
  For the syren Hope, has sung with thee.

There is music that tells, in that piping cry,
  Of joy and beauty a thousand tales,
Of glorious suns in the clear, bright sky,
  That will gild our path among hill and vales.

When thou trillest thy song, summer's balmy wing
Chases mists and clouds from the mountain's brow;
More sweetly the birds of the grove may sing,
But none are so welcome and gay as thou.

L.

ORDER GRALLÆ.

The White Stork.

Ardea Ciconia.

THE white storks, though now rare visitants, are still occasionally found in this country. One was shot in the county of Suffolk last year. They are birds of such pleasing and interesting habits, that if we knew by what means they might be induced to colonize in our island, we should certainly attempt to lure them hither. Unlike the black stork, who selects as its favourite haunts the lonely desert and the desolate morass, and builds its nest in the depths of the forest, the white stork seeks the neighbourhood of mankind, and fixes its abode in populous cities. Every where it is the welcome and confiding guest of man, building its nest on the roof of his house,

and seeking its prey in his fields and gardens. It is peculiarly protected in Holland, where it makes itself very valuable to the inhabitants, by clearing the marshes and humid valleys from the lizards, serpents, frogs, and other reptiles with which they are infested. The Vaudois honour it for the same cause, and will not suffer it to be molested. The Oriental nations generally regard it as a sacred bird, and prohibit its destruction. The Arab looks on its presence as a pledge of the welfare of his family, and would deem it a crime to violate the rights of hospitality due to his winged guest. The Mahomedans call it *belarje*; and consider it nearly as sacred as the ancient Egyptians did the ibis. To disturb them would be thought a profanation, much more to kill them. In ancient Thessaly it was so highly prized for its services, in clearing the country of serpents, that its destruction was forbidden under pain of death. The Moors look on it as sacrilege to kill one of these birds; and in the valley of Monkazem, in Barbary, it is reported they are more numerous than the inhabitants.

Nor is it only on account of its usefulness that the stork is thus highly esteemed by man; much of the honour it receives, arises from its being considered emblematic of high moral qualities, of which we shall speak hereafter. It is

time we should refer more minutely to its habits. The disposition of this bird is gentle and confiding; it is easily tamed, and has been known to mingle with the sports of children, yielding itself to their playfulness, as if willing to contribute to their amusement. The stork is a most devoted parent, feeding her young for a long period, and aiding them with the tenderest care, in their first feeble attempts to fly, carrying them on her wings, and defending them in danger with the utmost courage; and when to save them is impossible, she will perish with them rather than abandon them in their extremity.

An incident which occurred in the conflagration of the city of Delft, has often been mentioned. "A stork was observed to make extraordinary efforts to carry off her helpless brood to a place of safety. Her attempts were unsuccessful; but though she had failed to rescue them from the threatened destruction, she would not desert them in their peril. She remained with them in the midst of the flames, and shared their fate, being thus consumed in the same funeral pile with her beloved family."

In maternal tenderness, however, the storks are not unequalled by other birds; but they exceed them all in the filial affection the young evince towards their parents. We have been interested by

observing the regard some of the gallinæ race, particularly the Guinea fowls, show for the foster-parent, usually a common hen, under whose wing they have been reared. However numerous the inmates of the poultry-yard, the Guinea-fowls never fail to recognise their former protectress, for many months after they have ceased to be her charge, greeting her apparently with a few kindly words, whenever they chance to meet, and often walking by her side for some time, as if to prolong the conversation. We have been struck by this as a very pleasing instance, in which the birds of the air might read a lesson to ungrateful man. But the gentle stork goes much further than our acquaintance of the poultry-yard. Reared and fostered with the tenderest care by the parent birds, they return in a later day all the kindness they have received, bestowing on them the most affectionate attentions when they are old and feeble: they bring them food when languishing under sickness and debility, and in their long migratory flights they are said to assist these aged parents by carrying them on their backs.

Sir John Hill quotes, from a Danish writer, an account of the manner in which the storks return to that country in the spring. "At this time it is not uncommon to see several of the old

birds, who are tired and feeble with their long flight, supported at times on the backs of the young; and the peasants speak of it as a certainty, that many of these are, when they return to their home, laid carefully in the old nests, and cherished by the young ones, which they reared with so much care the spring before. If the account this gentleman gives (says Sir John) be singular, it is in no part unnatural. We see innumerable instances of what we call instinct, and who shall say that this is too great for credit? Who shall lay down laws to determine where the gifts of a Creator to his creatures shall stop, or how they shall be limited."

This filial devotion of the stork has long been marked by man, and justly admired. When the ancient Greeks passed a law, obliging children to support their parents, they gave it a name which had reference to this bird. "Its very name in the Hebrew language," says a modern writer, "signifies *mercy*, or *piety;* and its English name is taken, if not directly, yet secondarily, through the Saxon, from the Greek word *storgé*, which is often used in our language for natural affection."*

Among the Romans the appearance of a stork

* Harris's Nat. Hist. of the Bible.

was considered by their augurs as significant of union and concord; while its departure, under any adverse circumstances was held to be a sure presage of misfortune.

It is related of Atilla, that when about to raise the seige of Aquileia, wearied out by a protracted resistance, he changed his plan and continued the siege, because some storks had been observed to fly away from the place, bearing their young with them; thus, according to the prevailing opinion, indicating that the fall of the devoted city was at hand. In the Egyptian hieroglyphics it was used as a symbol of piety and beneficence. It was likewise adopted by the Romans, as an emblem on the medals of such of their princes as received the appellation of *pius*.

These birds emigrate from the European countries they frequent, in the autumn: they prepare for their departure about the end of August, all the storks in a district assembling on some plain or open place daily, for some little time before the important journey is commenced. When assembled, a great clattering of bills takes place, and they appear to seek out and recognise each other, and hold counsel on their approaching flight. On some occasions these assemblies are very tumultuous, and from arguments the senators proceed to blows. In due time, however,

all matters are arranged, the period for their departure is fixed, and all the birds, arising with one consent, are soon on their way, sailing high amid the clouds.

It is not frequently that opportunities of observing their departure occur, as it often takes place in the night; and moreover, instead of flying off with much clamour, after the manner of the noisy cranes and wild geese, they set forth in silence, like beings who embark in some high emprize, with which they are too much occupied to give it utterance. They have been compared to well disciplined warriors, proceeding on their course with the utmost order, and in perfect silence.

Milton has thus described their flight.

> "Part loosely wing the region, part more rise,
> In common, ranged in figure, wedge their way,
> Intelligent of seasons, and set forth
> Their airy caravan, high over seas
> Flying, and over lands, with mutual wing
> Easing their flight."

The southern countries to which they principally migrate for the winter season, are Egypt and Barbary, where they are found in great numbers, in the autumn and winter. Most of these, on the return of spring, fly back to their old haunts in the northern climates, each couple,

it is said, repairing with the utmost punctuality to the nest they had occupied in the previous season: or if the nest should have been destroyed, building afresh on the site occupied by their former dwelling. In Alsace, Lorraine, and Holland, the inhabitants fix boxes on the roofs of their houses, for the accommodation of their annual visitors; who on their part appeared to be sensible of the kindness of their entertainers, and are said to show marks of attachment to their hosts.*

The stork is repeatedly mentioned in the Scriptures. It is, however, evident that the well-known passage in the Psalms, "As for the stork, the fir-trees are her house," refers to the *black* stork, a bird as fond of solitude as the white stork is of society; choosing the thick woods for its abiding-place, and building its nest in tall trees, especially fir-trees.

There is a passage in the prophet Jeremiah that applies equally to the black and the white stork. It is that in which the prophet contrasts the inconsiderate and forgetful nature of man, (who neglects to obey the laws of his Maker, and is not careful to follow the path marked out to him by the daily course of providential events,)

* See Griffith's Cuvier.

with the constant and never-failing obedience of the birds of the air, to the instinct with which they are endowed. "Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord."

We could scarcely see the out-spread wings of the stork extended in flight, without being reminded of the descriptive language of Zechariah: "The wind was in their wings; for they had wings, like the wings of a stork."

The beautiful imagery of Scripture is rich in allusions to various subjects of natural history, continually elucidating the most important themes by reference to the visible created beings of this lower world. And this connexion appears to us so interesting, that we delight to trace it ourselves, and to point it out to our young readers, wherever we can.

THE STORK,

Devoting herself to death, with her offspring, in the conflagration of a burning City.

The flames are on the city-walls,
Temple, and tower, and palace falls;
Danger and death are hovering near,
And shrieks of terror wound the ear.

Look upward at that feeble bird:
From her no cry of woe is heard;
With all a mother's love possest,
She hovers fondly o'er her nest,
And ev'ry tender art she tries,
To bear her children thro' the skies.

Poor bird! in vain is all thy care:
Thy cherish'd ones must perish there:
Their doom is seal'd, they can but die;
But thou mayst spread thy wings and fly.
Thy children soon must breathe their last,
Their death-pang will be quickly past.
All that maternal love can do
Has proved thee faithful, fond and true.
Oh! linger not a moment more,
Thy chance of life will soon be o'er.

Think ye maternal love will cease,
When danger and distress increase?
Believe it not—stronger than death,
It braves the fierce volcano's breath;
Undaunted faces every ill,
And bids the tempest work its will:
Lifts to the last the guardian shield,
And cannot fly, and will not yield.
That faithful bird heeds not your cry,
She will not spread her wings and fly.

Think not maternal love can tire;
That nest will be her funeral pyre.
More closely still she spreads her wings
Above those feeble, trembling things.
"Fly, faithful bird, there still is space,
Nor perish with thy helpless race!"
She heeds us not:—the flames ascend,
And all in one wide ruin blend;
And since their lives she cannot save,
She shares with them one common grave.

Firm courage that will never quail,
Still strongest in the stormiest gale,
Undaunted zeal wouldst thou behold?
Oh! go not to the stern and cold;
But where the warm affections dwell,
There look thou for its mightiest spell:
For love, e'en in its lowest form,
Hath power the coward heart to warm,
And in its highest, calleth down
The strength that wins the martyr's crown.

THE HERRING GULL.

CHAPTER V.

THE SIXTH ORDER.

PALMIPEDES OR SWIMMERS.

The birds of this order are characterised by their feet and legs formed for swimming; that is to say, placed far back on the body, with short and compressed tarsi, and webs between the toes. A close, shining plumage, moistened by an oily secretion, and furnished near the skin with a thick down, protects them from the water, on the surface of which they live. They are also the only birds in which the neck is longer, and sometimes considerably so, than the legs; because, while swimming on the surface, they have frequent occasion to seek their food below it.—*Cuvier*.

ORDER PALMIPEDES.

The Herring Gull. Silvery Gull.

Larus Argentatus.

FEW persons can have frequented the shores of our island, without observing and admiring the

numerous birds of this tribe, which hover over the rocks, burst screaming from the crags, or ride, with a composure truly wonderful, on the foaming wave. We remember to have heard that some English family bears the gull for its crest, with the motto, "Composed in the midst of storms." Such a device must rank as one of the most tasteful of heraldic decorations. The notes of the gull are anything but musical; yet they mingle well with wind and wave, and harmonize with the scenes in the midst of which these birds are found. Though devoid of the charms of song, they have abundant attractions for the wanderer who watches their movements, and listens to their wild cries in their favourite haunts. How beautiful are they, when seen wheeling their flight over the base of the steep cliffs at sunset, reflecting the golden light on their white wings and breasts, till they look like the dove of the sacred bard, "whose wings are of silver, and her feathers of wrought gold!" And what can be so expressive of reposing confidence and self-possession amidst change and turbulence, as the quiet floating of this pleasant bird on the swell of the billow, as it rolls onward to break in foam upon the rocks, leaving the little swimmer undisturbed on its restless resting-place?

Of the gulls in general, Bewick observes: "The bill is strong and straight, but bent downwards at the point; the nostrils pervious, oblong and narrow, and placed in the middle. The lower mandible has an angular prominence on the under side, which tapers towards, and forms its tip. The tongue is a little cloven. The body is clothed with a great quantity of down and feathers, which, together with the large head and wings, give these birds an appearance of bulk without a proportionate weight. The legs are small, naked above the knees: feet webbed, and the back toe detached, and very small."

Gulls are found in every quarter of the world, and various species frequent our native shores. They are said to be a voracious race, feeding on either flesh or fish in any state in which they can procure it. In consequence of their nature requiring so large a portion of food, they are compelled to use constant exertion to obtain a supply, and are almost continually on the wing, or breasting the wave in search of prey. They fly vast distances, and have been met with more than a hundred leagues from land. It appears to be very difficult for them to procure food amid the violence of tempests and hurricanes, though they are still seen on the ocean, safe amid the war of elements. A naturalist at Na-

ples made some interesting observations on these birds during a tempestuous season. He remarked that the gulls, which from time to time dropped on the sea, were too light to sink beneath the surface, and were tossed about like mere balls of feather. For a few moments they seemed swallowed up, but presently they were seen again on the summit of the billow, safe as the foam which crested it. From this unstable bed they sprung into the air without difficulty, notwithstanding the length of their wings. From this circumstance it has been thought that gulls, and other birds similarly constituted, when wearied with long-continued flight over the ocean, repose themselves on the bosom of the waters, and when rested, spring again into the air and pursue their course.

The herring-gull, the bird figured above, is so named from its following and preying on the shoals of herrings. It makes its nest on the projecting ledges of rock. Its eggs, three in number, are of a dull white, spotted with black. This species is remarkable for its watchful habits: it is said, indeed, to serve as a sort of sentinel to all the birds, and even the seals within reach of its signal. The moment a sportsman is seen with his gun, it is on the alert, and gives warning of the danger by its loud and clamorous cries.

THE SEA-GULL.

On the far rolling breaker's snowy breast,
The sea-gull presses her silvery breast:
The wave is a pillow of down to her,
She heeds not the element's stormy stir:
She has peace within, and tranquil repose,
As lightly over the ocean she goes.
Her wing in the billowy surges she laves,
Composed in the tempest, at rest on the waves.

Wild, wild as the wind is the sea-bird's cry,
As far over the ocean-cliffs they fly:
It were discord, if heard in the forest glade,
Where mavis and merle sweet music have made;
But it mingles well with the breaker's roar,
And the blast that sweeps round the rocky shore,
While the tranquil bird in the billow laves,
Composed in the tempest, at rest on the waves.

Did I wish for the lot of birds of the air,
Or long in their fleeting perfections to share;
It is not the strength of the strongest wing,
It is not the sweetest songs that they sing,
Nor the sapphire gleam of their gem-like hues—
It is not all these that my heart would choose:
My spirit the sea-bird's serenity craves,
Composed in the tempest, at rest on the waves.

ORDER PALMIPEDES.

The Stormy Petrel.

Procellaria Pelagica.—Linn.

Bewick describes this bird as the least of all the web-footed birds, measuring only about six inches in length, and thirteen in breadth. The upper parts of the plumage are black, sleek, and glossed with bluish reflections; the brow, cheeks, and under parts, sooty brown; some of the feathers on the sides of the tail white; legs slender, black, and scarcely an inch and three quarters in length from the knee-joint to the end of the toes. It resembles the chimney-swallow in its general appearance, and the swiftness of its flight. Cuvier mentions, as common to all the petrels, that they have their bills bent at the end, their nostrils united in one tube, their feet with a claw or spur on the heel in the place of a thumb. The most remarkable circumstance in the habits of these little birds is their power of

walking on the water by means of their wings, from whence both their French name, *petit pierre*, and their English name, Petrel, are derived. These hardy little creatures live almost entirely on the sea, rarely quitting it, except to build their nests and rear their young, who are soon led out on the waters by their parents, and early established as tenants of the ocean: they are literally

"Nursed on the rock, and cradled in the storm."

Petrels are met with by navigators in every part of the ocean, diving, running, or skimming over the waves of the most tempestuous sea, in perfect ease and security. The tempest, indeed, befriends them, by bringing to the surface of the agitated waters the marine animals on which they feed. At the approach of a storm, it is true, they are seen to take refuge in the wake of a ship, or in the rigging: this is simply because the wind having great power over their wings, which are of an unusual extent for the size of the bird, they sometimes find themselves unable to resist its violence. But so little do they need the aid of any common place of refuge from the tempest, that when a vessel is not at hand, they are content to shelter themselves in the deep hollows between two swelling waves, and will

remain there some instants, notwithstanding the rapid rolling of the sea. It is observed that they run in these ever-changing furrows of the sea, as larks do in those of the land. Such are the habits of the Petrels, when on the ocean, which may be said to be their home; since it is only during a short season of the year that they visit the land. Of the place of abode which they select for rearing their young, a gentleman, who made an ornithological tour to the Shetland and Orkney Islands in the summer of 1828, has given the following interesting description. It was in the small and rocky island of Foula that he met with the adventure he recounts; and it is necessary to give you his description of the island, to convey a clear idea of the wild spots the petrel chooses as the earliest home of her young brood, before she leads them out on the waters, to claim their inheritance of wind and wave.

"Foula," says the traveller, "is a romantic curiosity, being about three miles in circumference. A range of lofty hills traverses it from south-east to north-west, and the ascent upon the north-east side is extremely steep; so much so, that to attain the top, it is necessary to catch hold of the dwarf heather at every step. On the other side they gradually slope away to the

sea, and, ending abruptly, present the most stupendous and awful precipices. The natives are kind and hospitable, ever willing to lend you all the assistance possible, to guide you through the cliffs, scale the rocks, and brave the most perilous dangers. Nursed from infancy amid the roar of winds and waves, and the boiling lash of the foaming surge, they traverse, with perfect ease, the most towering and splinter-shaped pinnacles of rock, in quest of wild-fowl for subsistence. On the southern side of the island is one of the most stupendous cliffs I ever beheld. It consists of a lofty mountain, entirely isolated, resembling a cone split or divided from its very summit to the sea. Viewed from the sea in a boat, it strikes the imagination as the brickwork of a gigantic fortress, being in itself perfectly mural, with scarcely a broken chasm or rent observable, so regular and so beautiful is this bulwark of nature. It is estimated to be about one thousand five hundred feet above the level of the sea, and is resorted to by innumerable hosts of aquatic birds. The kittiwake and guillemot occupy the lowest part; above them the herring-gull, and a few of the black-headed gull; and higher still the Manks puffin, common puffin, and stormy petrel; the whole forming a scene truly delightful to the eye of the ornitho-

logist. As the stormy petrel is scarcely ever to be seen near the land, except in very boisterous weather, one of the natives, for a trifling remuneration, agreed to traverse the face of this rock, and take me some from out of its fissures. Accordingly, accoutred with a rope of hemp and hogs' bristles coiled over his shoulders, he proceeded to the cliff. Having made one end fast by means of a stake, he threw the coil over the face of the rock, and gradually lowered himself down, but with the utmost caution, carefully pressing his foot upon the narrow ridges before he at all loosened his firm grasp of the rope, which he never abandoned altogether. I had previously thrown myself upon my chest, to enable me to have a better view of him, by looking over the cliffs; and certainly, to see the dexterity and bravery with which he threw himself from one aperture to another was grand. The Atlantic was foaming many hundred feet beneath, and dashing its curling surges against the dark base of the cliff, in sheets of the most beautiful white; while the herring and black-headed gulls sweeping past him, so as to be almost within reach of his arms, threw wildness into the scene, by the discordant scream of the former, and the laughing, oft-repeated bark of the latter. This, however, he appeared entirely

to disregard; and continuing his search, returned in about half an hour with seven or eight of the stormy petrels tied up in an old stocking; and a pair of Manks puffins, together with their eggs. The birds, he told me, he had no difficulty in capturing. The eggs of the stormy petrel are surprisingly large, considering the diminutive size of the bird, being as large as those of the thrush. The female lays two eggs of a dingy white, encircled at the larger end by a ring of fine rust-coloured freckles. The birds merely collect a few pieces of dried grass, with a feather or two, barely sufficient to prevent the eggs from rolling, or moving on the rock."*

What became of the poor petrels, thus seized in their rocky fastnesses, and carried away captive by the hand of the spoiler, the writer does not say. They were probably destined to enrich some inland museum, and did not return to tell the perils of the land to their friends on the ocean, and rejoice with them in the safety of rolling billows and foaming surges.

"The stormy petrel," says Wilson, "is found over the whole Atlantic ocean, from Europe to

* See, Account of an Ornithological Visit to the Islands of Shetland and Orkney. By R. Drosier, Esq. in Mag. of Nat. Hist. No. 14.

North America, at all distances from land, and in all weathers; but is particularly numerous near vessels immediately preceding and during a gale, when flocks of them crowd in her wake, seeming more than usually active in picking up various matters from the surface of the water. This presentiment of a change of weather is not peculiar to the petrels; but is noted in many others, and common to all.

They make their nests in the holes and cavities of the rocks upon the seas, returning to feed their young during the night, with the superabundant oily matter from their stomachs. At these times they may be heard making a continual clucking sound during the whole of the night. In the day they are silent, and wander widely over the ocean. The rapidity of their flight is at least equal to the fleetness of our swallow. One circumstance is worthy of being noticed, and shows the vast range they take over the ocean. In firing at these birds, a quill-feather was broken in each wing of an individual, and hung fluttering in the wind, which rendered it so conspicuous among the rest, as to be known to all on board. This bird continued with us for nearly a week, during which time we sailed a distance of more than four hundred miles to the northward.

As these birds often come up immediately under the stern of vessels, one can examine their form and plumage with nearly as much accuracy as if they were in the hand. They fly with the wings forming an almost horizontal straight line with the body, the legs extended behind, and the feet partly seen stretching beyond the tail; their common note of *weet, weet,* is scarcely louder than that of a young duck of a week old, and much resembles it. During the whole of a wet and boisterous night, which I spent on deck, they flew about the after-rigging, making a singular hoarse chattering, which in sound resembled the syllables, *pa-tut-tu-cuk-cuk-tu-tu,* laying the accent strongly on the second syllable *tut.* Now and then I conjectured they alighted on the rigging, making then a lower whizzing noise.

The most singular peculiarity of this bird is its faculty of standing, and even running upon the surface of the water, which it performs with apparent facility. When any greasy matter is thrown overboard, these birds instantly collect around it, facing to windward, with their long wings expanded, and their webbed feet patting the water: the lightness of their bodies, and the action of the wind on their wings, enabling them to do this with ease. In calm weather they perform the same manœuvre by keeping

their wings just so much in motion as to prevent their feet from sinking below the surface."*

We add a short notice from our obliging ornithological correspondent, to whom we have already been so much indebted.—" I am informed by mariners, that these birds, though formed for swimming, are mostly on the wing, like our swallow, feeding on marine insects.

" There are but one or two islands where they are known to nestle, and where they are seen in a state of repose. It is peculiar that they are never seen far at sea but in stormy weather. These birds are oftener met with inland, in Britain, than Bewick speaks of; but are driven to this coast by bad weather."—W. K.

THE SONG OF THE STORMY PETREL.

The lark sings for joy on her own loved land,
In the furrow'd fields, by the breezes fann'd;
And so revel we,
In the furrow'd sea,
As joyous and glad as the lark can be.

On the placid breast of the inland lake,
The wild duck delights her pastime to take;
But the petrel braves
The wild ocean waves,
His wing in the foaming billow he laves.

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* Wilson's Ornithology.

The halcyon loves, in the noontide beam,
To follow his sport on the tranquil stream;
He fishes at ease
In the summer breeze,
But we go angling in stormiest seas.

No song-note have we but a piping cry,
That blends with the storm, when the winds rise high;
When the land-birds wail
We sport in the gale,
And merrily over the ocean we sail.

THE PETREL.

Bird of the ocean, whose fluttering wing,
Seems ever to touch the brink of the grave,
How can it be that so feeble a thing
Successfully combats the wind and the wave?
He who hath formed thee, He only could give
Strength 'mid the war of the waters to live.

As the petrel braves the hurricane's gloom,
A bark has flown over the stormy sea;
We thought that the billow had been its tomb,
But the noble vessel was floating free;
And ploughing her course through the ocean foam,
She hath brought the sailor in safety home.

Wanderer, thy bark with its beautiful form,
And its graceful sails that bend at thy will,
Who gave it the power to strive with the storm?
Oh! remember, it was not thy puny skill.
The issues from death belong not to thee,
But to Him who hath formed the land and the sea.

ADDITIONAL NOTICES.

We persuade ourselves that many of our readers will be interested with the additional observations, chiefly on the British Song Birds, which we have here thrown together: they are drawn from various sources.

THE NIGHTINGALE.

"The nightingale unites the talents of all the singing birds, and succeeds in every style—sixteen different burdens may be reckoned in its song, well determined by the first and last notes. It can sustain the song uninterrupted during twenty seconds, and the sphere which its voice can fill is at least a mile in diameter. Song is so peculiarly the attribute of this bird, that even the female possesses it; less strong and varied, it is true, than that of the male, but as to the rest entirely resembling it. Even in its dreaming sleep the nightingale warbles. What peculiarly constitutes

the charm of this bird, is that it never repeats itself like other birds—it creates at each burden or passage: and even if it ever resumes the same, it is always with new accents and added embellishments."—*Griffith's Cuvier.*

THE SONG-THRUSH.

"Here we have one of the most musical of British birds. He is one of the first harbingers of spring; and his loud and powerful pipe is always hailed with pleasure. His song is continued for hours together, and consists of short passages, each repeated two or three times. Some of these passages are very fine, and true to the chromatic scale. The song thrush has more variety in his notes than any other British bird, the nightingale not excepted."—*Main on British Song Birds, Magazine Natural History*, vol. iv.—1831.

THE BLACKCAP

"Is the *contra-alto* singer of the woodland choir. The fine, varied, joyous song of this emigrant is noticed by the most listless auditor: the strain occupies about three bars of triple time in the performance, and though very frequently repeated, is somewhat varied in every repetition. He begins with two or three short essays of double notes, gradually *crescendo* up to a loud and full swell of varied expression. One passage often occurs, as truly enunciated as if performed on an octave flute. The style and key of the song are nearly the same in all individuals, though some may be noticed to vary in style. I knew one bird that frequented the same

spot of a wood for three summers, who signalized himself by an arrangement of notes, very much excelling his brethren around. The blackcap is certainly the finest singer of the whole tribe of warblers, except the nightingale."—*Ibid.*

THE GOLDEN-CRESTED WREN.

"The song of this little chorister has been aptly compared to that of a fairy. It is a short strain, repeated at short intervals, weak, yet agreeable; sung inwardly, and in such a manner, that though the tiny warbler may be in the nearest bush, the notes seem to come from a considerable distance. It can only be heard when near, except in very calm weather. It sings only in the spring months, and is most frequently seen in that season among the lower branches of the fir-trees, where it seeks its food, and every now and then warbles its fairy strain."—*Ibid.*

THE WILLOW-WREN.

"This is the smallest of the warblers, except only the common and golden-crested wrens. Their song is heard in the thick woods soon after their arrival, about the 20th of April. It is a soft, pleasant strain, repeated from time to time, with considerable pauses between; beginning in a pretty high pitch, (forte,) diminishing, by slurred gradations, down to lower tones, scarcely audible. As their chaunt is given in the full chorus of the woods, and among several others which sing in the same key, it requires an experienced ear to catch and identify the song."—*Ibid.*

THE COMMON CHIMNEY-SWALLOW.

"This, though rather low on the scale of vocalists, few will deny but that it is amusing to hear, twittering from his clay-built shed; especially at early dawn. His song consists of a strain about one minute in continuance, prettily enough modulated, repeated at intervals, and always ended with a shrill note, rapidly shaken. He also sings on the wing, in fine weather, when the hen sits; seldom after the young are hatched, nor until they are able to fly. When congregating on fine evenings, they all join in a joyous, twittering chorus, in which the young assist. The swallow is one of the most vigilant videttes for the safety of the feathered race. No sooner does a hawk, or other bird or beast of prey come in view, than he raises his shrill note of alarm, *chee, chee;* and while almost all other birds fly to covert, the swallow, dauntless, mounts aloft to face the foe, menacing and attacking with fury, till he drives the intruder from the neighbourhood. In this attack, the crow only has the courage to assist. I have often noticed that the swallows, on returning home from the pursuit, unite in a song of gratulatory exultation. None of the other hirundines are musical. The house and sand-martlets have only faint calls of a note or two; and the shrill *sweeree* of the swift, can hardly be called a song."—*Ibid.*

THE SKYLARK.

"This is a justly celebrated bird of song. His joyous matins and heavenward flight have been aptly

compared to hymns and acts of adoration and praise. No bird sings with more method: there is an overture performed, *vivace crescendo*, while the singer ascends; when at the full height, the song becomes *moderato*, and distinctly divided into short passages, each repeated three or four times over, like a *fantasia*, in the same key and time. If there be any wind, he rises perpendicularly by bounds, and afterwards poises himself with breast opposed to it. If calm, he ascends in spiral circles; in horizontal circles during the principal part of his song; and zig-zagly downwards during the performance of the *finale*. Sometimes, after descending about half way, he ceases to sing, and drops with the velocity of an arrow to the ground. Those acquainted with the song of the skylark can tell, without looking at them, whether the birds be ascending or stationary in the air, or on their descent; so different is the style of song in each case. In the first there is an expression of ardent impatience; in the second, an *andante* composure, in which rests of a bar at a time frequently occur; and in the last, a gradual sinking of the strains, often touching the sub-dominant before the final close. The time and number of the notes often correspond with the vibrations of the wings; and though they sometimes sing while on the ground, as they are seen to do in cages, their whole frame seems to be agitated by their musical efforts."—*Ibid.*

THE WOODLARK.

"This bird, though it mostly lives and breeds on the ground, often sits on trees; hence its specific

name. Its song is peculiarly soft and pleasing, consisting of a few passages repeated from time to time, beginning high in double-slurred notes, and descending plaintively *diminuendo*. They sing on the wing; but neither rise so high as the skylark, nor sing with half its power. They differ also from the last in continuing their song sometimes throughout the night, especially if two or more are singing together, as if excited by a kind of rivalry."—*Ibid.*

THE CUCKOO.

On the question, whether the peculiar cry of *cuckoo* is uttered by the male or female bird, Mr. Main makes some ingenious remarks. Alluding to the circumstance that the titlark is so often seen following the cuckoo, he observes, "That to watch the motions of the cuckoo, and drive her away from the neighbourhood of the titlark's nest, in which she is especially prone to deposit her eggs, is no doubt the aim of the little bird; for when on the wing, it is often seen to dart on the cuckoo, as the swallow does on the sparrow-hawk." He proceeds to say, "If, as suggested above, the titlark has any instinctive perception of the imposition intended by the cuckoo, the object of the small bird's attack must be the female; and if the female, then I am certain she sings the peculiar note; because I have seen her repeatedly struck at while singing it." In confirmation of this opinion, we add a notice which has been obligingly communicated to us by T. Bosvile, Esq. of Ravenfield Park, Yorkshire. "Often as I hear the note of the cuckoo, I never before recollect having had one in my

hand. My gardener shot one the other day, on a charge (false, I suspect) of destroying partridge's eggs. He most positively asserts that it was crying 'cuckoo' when he shot it. The bird was opened, and two eggs found in her."

THE STORMY PETREL.

Whilst this little work has been going through the press, we have received, from a scientific friend, the following notice of the inland traveller of the Petrel race.

"On the 16th of December, 1831, a fine specimen of the fork-tailed petrel, (Bewick,) procellaria leachii, (Temne,) was caught by some boys in the neighbourhood of Alton, Hants, thirty miles from the sea, much exhausted. It appeared to have been driven inland by the prevalence of strong southerly gales, which had banished it from its native element some days, as it was very thin, and almost destitute of oil, usually so abundant in these birds. Its weight one ounce, length seven inches and three quarters, expanse of wing seventeen inches and three quarters. In all respects Bewick's description is perfectly accurate."—Wm. Curtis.

THE END.

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